Latinxs and Black Lives Matter: Latinx Talk Mini-Reader #1

Rosa Amador and Theresa Delgadillo

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UW-MADISON
MADISON, WI

Published in 2021. Readers and users may cite this content in scholarly and commercial publications with appropriate credit. Digital Online Downloadable Open Educational Resource. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18061/2575-887X.0001

This book was produced with Pressbooks (https://pressbooks.com) and rendered with Prince.

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About *Latinx Talk* Mini-Readers

Latinx Talk Mini-Readers offer a curated selection of essays and creative work previously published on our site and our predecessor site, *Mujeres Talk*, on specific themes and topics, followed by a set of discussion questions relevant to the readings. We hope these resources contribute to growing knowledge in and of Latinx Studies, expanding dialogues on critical issues, and turning ideas into praxis. These mini-readers are made for classroom and community use. *Mujeres Talk* published from 2011 to 2017. *Latinx Talk* has been in publication since 2017.

Acknowledgements

With gratitude to the faculty and students who have, over the years, collaborated to build *Mujeres Talk* and *Latinx Talk* through contributing, reviewing, writing, editing, copyediting, and building networks of dialogue among scholars in Latinx Studies with few resources and amidst skepticism about a Latinx digital presence. Thank you to Isabel Espinal at the University of Massachusetts and Roberto Delgadillo at the University of California at Davis for your expertise and advice in creating the Mini-Readers project. Our thanks to Andrew Turner for Pressbooks assistance at UW Madison with this Mini-Reader. Thank you to Maureen Walsh, Johanna Meetz, and Sean Moodie at the OSU Libraries Digital Publishing Project, and to their predecessor Melanie Schlosser, for publishing *Mujeres Talk* and *Latinx Talk*. And last but not least, thank you to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison with funding from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.

Introduction

Rosa Amador and Theresa Delgadillo

The murder of George Floyd in 2020 was an event not only witnessed around the globe but one that sparked a global movement against systemic racism in all its manifestations. This mini-reader gathers together a series of short statements, dialogues, analyses, reflections, and one poem first published on our site that voice solidarity with Black struggles against racism worldwide as they analyze the connections among Latinxs, African Americans and other struggles of minoritized groups. Our platform is dedicated to the publication of research and commentary in short form, that is, under 2000 words per piece, therefore, although this reader has eleven chapters, they are all short chapters. While the essays collected here reflect the ongoing work of our interdisciplinary field to cultivate critical knowledge about the full range of experiences, arts, and histories of Latinx peoples and our interconnections with other minoritized populations, they are also examples of scholars generating analyses to understand particular contemporary moments and events or to question frameworks and directions both in everyday discourse and in academic research. Most importantly, they reflect a concerted effort to think the category of Latinx as a multiracial one, to consider historical and contemporary alliances with African Americans and other minoritized groups, and to construct an understanding of social justice that is inclusive rather than exclusive. The work collected

here also strives to creates solidarities in the face of institutionalized racism.

Solidarities, Challenges and Lacunae

This mini-reader opens with the 2020 statement by the Editorial and Advisory Board of *Latinx Talk* in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others whose lives have been lifted up by the Black Lives Matter movement to demand justice. BLM has exercised extraordinary leadership in recognizing and addressing this ongoing injustice, bringing millions together to collectively mourn the lives lost to police violence and to organize to end systemic racism. The *Latinx Talk* statement expresses solidarity with this movement as it takes up a topic that is addressed in multiple chapters of this mini-reader: anti-Black racism among Latinxs. We follow this with the 2014 discussion by the *Mujeres Talk* Editorial Board members following the murder of unarmed teen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Black Lives Matter calls for justice in that case. The 2014 statement, like the 2020 statement, considers the shared situation of Latinx and African Americans as targets of police violence and detention/ incarceration but also considers how state violence in our hemisphere might create new solidarities. In Chapter Three, Rachel F. Gómez, Michelle Rascon-Canales and Andrea Romero examine how pervasive anti-Black bias collides with racialized notions of womanhood and motherhood in affecting sports figure Serena Williams. Both chapters echo the call by Petra Rivera-Rideau, Omaris Z. Zamora, Sandy Plácido and Dixa Ramirez in Chapter Four to combat anti-Black racism among Latinxs — one that also reverberates in the essays by Michaela

Machicote (Chapter Six), Gabriela Spears-Rico (Chapter Seven), Oriel María Siu (Chapter Ten), and Jesus G. Smith (Chapter Eleven) in this collection. Rivera-Rideau, Zamora, Plácido and Ramirez draw from their own experience and research in advocating for the development of greater knowledge about important Afro-Latinx figures and movements in Latinx, Gender, and African American Studies, as they also consider conceptual frameworks that can encompass a multiracial Latinidad.

Historical and Conceptual Challenges

Questions about the limits and nuances of popular discourses of race and gender with respect to Latina visibility and representation emerge in María Elena Cepeda's analysis of the NFL halftime show in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six, Michaela Machicote questions Latinx proximity to whiteness, and critically examines Latin American discourses of mestizaje as well as anti-Black racism that circulate within Latinx communities, considering how exclusion operates through national self-conceptions. In Chapter Seven, Gabriela Spears-Rico considers how U.S. Latinx critical conceptions of nepantla and mestizaje work as weapons against anti-Blackness as they call us to enact a more inclusive vision of social justice. Inés Hernández-Ávila's poem in Chapter Eight embodies a critical Chicana and indigenous solidarity with global black struggle, recognizing Mandela as an indigenous leader, as it returns to themes raised in Chapters One and Two of parallels between varied incarcerated populations.

Struggles in Higher Education and Beyond

The final set of essays resonate with earlier chapters in considering the exclusion of minoritized populations from the spaces of higher education as they also demonstrate the multiple kinds of actions taken to combat systemic racism both in higher education and in wider communities. In Chapter Nine, Linda Garcia Merchant discusses her support for Black film students struggling to end racism at their school and her participation in that effort as an influence in her ongoing film and educational work. Oriel Maria Siu in Chapter Ten considers the legacies of racism rooted in academia as she celebrates the achievement of graduating students of color and encourages them on the road of continue transformation. Finally, in Chapter Eleven, Jesus G. Smith offers a personal account of working to create greater connections among Black, Latinx, and queer communities. Smith's essay is an example of enacting solidarity that is attentive to the multiple subjectivities encompassed by the term Latinx. We hope this collection generates much fruitful discussion and dialogue in your classroom or group.

1.

Statement of Solidarity from Editorial and Advisory Board

Published on *Latinx Talk* on June 5, 2020

Latinx Talk Editorial and Advisory Boards

Photo credit: MLK March in Oakland, CA by Daniel Arauz. January 19, 2015. CC BY 2.0

The Editorial and Advisory Boards of *Latinx Talk* join with the millions of individuals across the United States and the world who are marching, writing, speaking, and advocating for justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the many other people of color who have been denied their lives, due process, and humanity by law enforcement. We join with the millions across the U.S. and the world calling for transparency and accountability on behalf of these individuals and their families and we stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement. We call on police departments across the country to de-escalate their responses to the largely peaceful protests and, in these pandemic times, to allow protestors enough space to demonstrate peacefully and safely. We join with protestors in demanding a re-examination of policing and criminal justice at every level of

our nation. And we demand that our political leaders not only dismantle systems that continue to reproduce racial injustice, but that they also address the economic disparities between struggling communities of color and the economically privileged.As a site dedicated to the publication and amplification of critical scholarship on issues affecting members of the Latinx community, we also want to emphasize the important role of academic research and knowledge in facilitating discussions to dismantle the systems that perpetrate violence against Black and Latinx communities. It is especially important during this time to reflect on the ways that anti-blackness has been perpetuated within the Latinx community and to recognize the multifaceted nature of Latinx identities, including those of our Afro-Latinx brothers and sisters. Therefore, we as *Latinx Talk*'s Editorial and Advisory Boards commit ourselves to publishing more research and commentary on criminal justice reform, incarceration and migrant detention, and racist violence. We also re-commit ourselves to maintaining an ethnically, racially, and gender diverse board. Overall, we pledge ourselves and our site to continue addressing the structural problem of racist violence through research, advocacy, and the uplifting of Black, Latinx, and Afro-Latinx experiences and perspectives.

2.

Mujeres Talk About Ferguson, and Beyond

Published on *Mujeres Talk* on December 30, 2014

Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, Theresa Delgadillo, Susy Zepeda, Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiel, Miranda Martinez, and Lucila D. Ek

The year 2014 ends with our eyes turned to the aftermath of the events at Ferguson, Missouri and elsewhere, where police violence against black and brown communities of color is being increasingly challenged through mass mobilizations. Angry, but also inspired, we at *Mujeres Talk* have collected our thoughts below, as part of the urgent discussion now surging into view about institutionalized violence against people of color.

Photo credit: NYC action in solidarity with Ferguson, Mo, encouraging a boycott of Black Friday Consumerism. Photo by The All-Nite Images. CC BY-SA 2.0

#BlackLivesMatter

Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo
Washington State University

Black lives matter. A statement of fact that becomes relevant in its temerity, its urgency, and its ability to express so simply a historical set of circumstances fraught with example after example revealing the opposite to be true. It is a bold response to the reality that negates it and makes its very articulation a necessity. Black lives matter. We must state this truth as many times as it is necessary. Because blacks lives become fragile in the hands of a society that seeks to destroy them. Black lives. They should matter. In Ferguson, MO. In Sanford, FL. Anywhere. Everywhere. Black lives matter. And yet. Black teenagers continue to be gunned down by police officers or vigilantes protected by a system that doubles down on them. And Baldwin comes to mind: “All I know is, he’s got a uniform and a gun and I have to relate to him that way. That’s the only way to relate to him because one of us may have to die.” May have to die. Poignant because we know who “the one of us” will be. Black lives matter. And yet. They continue to be extinguished by our institutions. Black lives matter. They matter.

#BlackLivesMatter #SomosFerguson Movements

Theresa Delgadillo
The Ohio State University

The recent deaths of black men and boys at the hands of police in the U.S., and news of earlier similar events, as well as the loss of life facing migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border brings into focus the deadly shortcomings of policies that rely on criminalization, militarization, detention, harsh sentencing, and imprisonment. The harsh policing in Black and Latina/o communities of Los Angeles described by Mike Davis morphed into the mass incarceration analyzed by Michelle Alexander and the increased surveillance of Black and Latina/o communities researched by Victor Ríos.[1] Black girls and Latinas are not exempt from prevailing policies and laws that punish their infractions more harshly – an area of research and policy that The African American Policy Forum is pursuing. Yet this increased turn to criminalization and incarceration also had its complement in U.S. immigration and border policies, where militarization and now massive criminalization and incarceration are the norm. Joseph Nevins analyzes this shift, one that grew increasingly strident post-9/11 – and that has led to the tragic loss of life at the border described by Luis Alberto Urrea.[2] Blanca E. Vega's recent blog on the *Latino Rebels* site makes the case that Blacks and Latinas/os are allies in the struggle for greater social justice, and takes Spanish-language media to task for not covering black deaths at the hands of police more thoroughly.

We desperately need to question how and why heightened criminalization and incarceration emerge as "solutions"

that disproportionately impact African Americans, Latinas/os, and migrants, and how such "solutions" can be undone. At The Ohio State University, we are involved this year in a series of events commemorating the 50th anniversaries of landmark pieces of legislation in the United States: the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.[3] Through a series of panel discussions, lectures, and interactive workshops, students and faculty at OSU have been and will be able to re-consider the significance of these two landmark laws; reflect on the movements, events, and consciousness that made them possible; discuss the histories that made them necessary; explore the opportunities they created; and critically assess contemporary inequalities that endure. For me, commemorating both of these events in a year when grassroots movements are once again making us aware of the loss of Black and Latina/o lives reminds me that civil rights and immigration are not merely linked by a shared legislative anniversary, but that instead, that shared anniversary marks a moment of heightened consciousness about the insidious effects of racism and discrimination that can permeate all aspects of U.S. policy.

Susy Zepeda
University of California, Davis

Photo credit: "Todxs somos Ayotzinapa." Demonstration in Montevideo, Uruguay. Photo by Lu Surroca. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

On November 24, 2014 the Ferguson, Missouri verdict to not indict Darren Wilson in the homicide of unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown sparked a response

that initially resembled the 1992 Los Angeles uprising after the Rodney King not-guilty verdict, yet has quickly erupted into a solidarity movement that surrounds the hashtag #blacklivesmatter and spans across geopolitical borders. An important connection in building consciousness around racialized and gendered police violence is the Spanish assertion "fue el estado" that has been articulated by activists, scholars, and other social actors who are seeking justice in the September 26th disappearance of the 43 students from a rural teacher-training school in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. According to Charlotte María Sáenz, the mainstay of this movement, particularly for the parents has been "Vivos se los llevaron y vivos los queremos" responding in critical disbelief to Mexican authorities declaration that the 43 are dead, similar to the way families and activists have challenged the vast "disappearance" and feminicide of mujeres in Juarez and beyond.[4] Another resonating and profound echo of solidarity with the disappeared students have been the words "They tried to bury us. They didn't know we were seeds," which Sáenz notes was said by the former Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos in honor of "his deceased compañero" Galeano, a teacher who was murdered in Chiapas, Mexico in May of 2014. The likening to seeds illuminates the awakening minds and bodies across imposed state borders that are simultaneously enunciating #not1more deportation, ni un@ más deportación. All together, these powerfully show the importance of solidarity movements against state violence that are not bound by imposed demarcations.

Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiel
University of California, Santa Cruz

At a recent event organized by Critical Resistance in solidarity with the protests against police violence against

black men and boys, Robin Kelley reminded us that the police use the excuse of fear (of black violence) to claim they acted in self-defense. In addition to the hash tag, #blacklivesmatter, which refutes the continued devaluation of black bodies inherited since slavery, Kelley sees these murders alongside settler colonialism where white, middle class or wealthy people intrude into black neighborhoods and then claim they are simply defending themselves from blacks, rather than vice-versa. This is similar to the scapegoating of Latino/a immigrants as perpetrators of crime and violence rather than groups displaced and killed at the hands of state and cartel violence, policies such as NAFTA, as well as the victims of abuse and death at the hands of the police and the border patrol. The Organization, "No More Deaths/No Más Muertes" released a report in 2011 that documents over 30,000 cases of abuse and murder by the border patrol. That the state is an arbiter of violence, rather than the force to protect people of color, is at the heart of Critical Resistance's radical move towards prison abolition that attempts to diminish the state's intrusion into communities by empowering communities to develop practices, organizations, and new models of social and economic interaction that help people flourish.

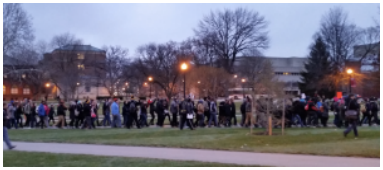

Photo credit: Peaceful march for Justice and End to Discrimination at Ohio State University Oval called by #CBUS2FERGUSON, December 8, 2014. Photo used with permission of author.

#ICantBreathe

Miranda Martinez
The Ohio State University

In New York City, right wing pundits and the head of the police union are accusing Mayor De Blasio and those who protest police violence of murder, following the murder and suicide by Ismaaiyl Brinsley of police officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos in Brooklyn. De Blasio has capitulated to these wild accusations, and requested that demonstrations pause while the city mourns the deaths of the two patrolmen.

It really does take one's breath away.

Samir Chopra has written about the toxic self-pity that is so embedded in the policing establishment. Psychically besieged, aggrieved and resentful, many urban police forces blame everything but the practices of law enforcement when their authority is challenged. And it seems to work! It appears that legitimate collective action by hundreds of thousands who peacefully marched against the status quo must stop every time police representatives claim injury with the blatant aim of disciplining dissent. Let's hope that the protests continue going forward because we need to show that black pain matters as much as police pain, and because the campaign to defame legitimate

protest by linking it with this brutal double slaying is just another outrageous example of anti-black racism. The conflation of civil rights protesters with a deranged murderer once again demonstrates (if we needed more proof) the instinctive, undiscriminating connection law enforcement officials make between blackness and violent criminality. We have to keep saying it, in the face of propaganda like this: Black lives matter.

Lucila D. Ek
University of Texas at San Antonio

The murders of Black children and men continue across the U.S. as Christmas Eve witnessed the shooting of yet another Black teenager by police. In Mexico, Federal Police are implicated in the disappearance and suspected murders of 43 student teachers in Guerrero. Every time I hear or read of another killing, my gut tightens and twists as I think about my Black and Brown loved ones on both sides of the border whose humanity is not recognized or valued by many. Often, I despair that things will never change, but widespread demonstrations against violence and death provide a glimmer of hope. People's consciousness is being raised as thousands have come together to protest police violence and to proclaim that Black and Brown lives matter. I have to believe that a mass movement for social change is emerging. ¡Ni uno más, ni una más!

Notes

1. Mike Davis. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. 1990. Vintage; Michelle Alexander. *The New*

Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. 2012. The New Press; Victor Rios. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. 2011. New York University Press.

2. Joseph Nevins. *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond: The War on "Illegals"and the Remaking of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary*. 2010. Routledge; Tanya Maria Golash-Boza. *Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions, and Deportations in Post-9/11 America*. 2012. Paradigm Publishers; Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz, Eds. *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement*. 2010. Duke University Press; Luis Alberto Urrea. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story*. 2005. Back Bay Books.
3. Our colleague in the School of Social Work, Professor Keith Kilty, inspired these events by reaching out to faculty in Asian American and Latina/o Studies, who in turn reached out to faculty and students in History, American Indian Studies, African American Studies, Disability Studies, Sexuality Studies, Women's Studies, Political Science, and Comparative Studies to plan and organize programs. 2015 also marks the 50th anniversary of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965.
4. Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano, eds. *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Americas*. 2010. Duke University Press.

3.

We See You, Hermana -- At All of Your Powerful Intersections! The White Racial Framing of Serena Williams

Published on *Latinx Talk* on February 5, 2019

Rachel F. Gómez, Michelle Rascon-Canales, and Andrea Romero

Photo credit: Serena Williams, taken May 29, 2013 by Flickr user Yann Caradec. CC BY-SA 2.0

This article arose from a discussion among Latinx scholars, disillusioned by the treatment and reaction to superstar-tennis-champion, mother and Black woman, Serena Williams, at the U.S. Open on September 8, 2018. It was clear to us that this performance of white racial framing (WRF) (Feagin, 2010) on Serena at this momentous point in the women's' championship match was exacerbated by her intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as a Black woman, and as a mother. Because of Williams' multiple intersections, we offer a counter-narrative to the popular one that went viral on social media — the trope of the

angry black woman, waving her finger in dissidence — by highlighting William's motherhood at the axis of oppression, and the ways Williams defies existing tropes of motherhood.

White Racial Framing

According to Feagin (2010), the white racial frame (WRF) is an analytical tool to better understand the interlocking ideas that help uphold racism and discrimination – images, sounds, stereotypes, etc. are central and interlinking with justifying racism and discrimination. The WRF is deep, pervasive and encompasses numerous sub-frames. There are two major sub-frames within the WRF: 1) virtuous whiteness sub-frame and 2) negative stereotyping of people of color sub-frame (p. 126). The first sub-frame is a pro-white sensibility in which white people view and understand themselves to be "good and decent folk," unconscious of any actual racist behavior enacted by oneself or by others in one's white community. As an operative in this sub-frame, white folk own a strong sense of personal and group entitlement to what they have, with a fundamental assumption that this is fair— "while willfully ignoring (intentionally forgetting, remaining 'invincibly ignorant' of) the horrific and ongoing injustices that, in fact, produce these things" (Feagin, 2010, p. 147). The belief that in the U.S. we live in a post-racial order where discussions of race are moot, reinforces the virtuous white sub-frame by removing white racism from discussion or consideration. Feagin identifies the WRF as having emerged in the U.S. by 1700 (Feagin, 2013, p. 55) and has been in circulation ever since.

The second major sub-frame within this WRF is the

negative stereotyping of people of color sub-frame. Racial stereotypes are important structural pieces of the WRF. They are widely held, somewhat fixed and essentialized beliefs about various racial groups. Negative racial stereotyping of people of color works within the contemporary WRF by promoting what to believe about various groups of people of color. This includes, within it, various anti-people of color sub=frames, including the way that people of color are racialized, sexualized, minimalized and demonized in popular discourse and media. For example, Latinx are framed in the media as responsible for the employment problems of other Americans — taking jobs, increasing crime rates, overpopulating and abusing government services, such as welfare and food stamp programs. In the same vein, the WRF of Black people includes: stereotypes of laziness, lack of gratitude, violence, criminality, hypersexuality and an oppositional orientation (Feagin, 2010).[1] An important foundation of this sub-frame is to understand that many white progressives "know" not to engage in negative stereotyping openly or in "front stage interactions" (Feagin 2010, p. 127) among white strangers or people of color. Instead, white folks "know" to partake in negative racial stereotyping only in settings where all are white, and where one can assume that no serious disapproval will be voiced. Feagin refers to these transactions as "back-stage interactions." In backstage settings, the expression of the WRF and the lack of objection to that expression provide a "social glue" that creates a sense of shared identity for the white group. These backstage racial performances provide the "images and emotions that generate many forms of racial discrimination by whites within the context of society" (p. 128) and are vital in perpetuating structural racism.

Intersections of Race, Gender and Motherhood

As we see it, Williams has continually been pigeonholed into the popular WRF of the Angry Black Woman, where her particular intersections of race and gender compound experiences of racism, combined with sexism. Certainly, this past U.S. Open on September 8, 2018 was not the first time Serena had experienced over-officiating. What has been overlooked in this inequitable experience on the court between Williams and the male umpire, is her intersection as mother. The complexity of her intersectionality as a Black woman and mother magnified her ill-treatment and the severity of her punishment by the male umpire, Carlos Ramos. Ramos, asserting his male dominance and baiting, asked her, "What would your daughter say?" to underscore his assertion that she was cheating, and behaving badly on the court. It may be implied from his comment, that instead, she should be a role model for her daughter, one that is quiet and that takes any injustice that may come her way. However, we are reclaiming that response and cheering on Williams for being the kind of mother and role model who is demonstrating to her daughter that she should fight for fairness and for her own achievement. If we understand motherhood at another axial point at which Williams experiences oppression, the crux of our argument, it follows that Williams' response to injustice and to her being baited is essential to her dignity and to reaffirming her vision of motherhood.

Despite being regarded as one of the greatest athletes alive, Williams is still expected to perform at the highest level in her sport and to speak only in what is allowed and acceptable within the WRF and its essentialized and fixed beliefs about Black women. After the interaction with the

umpire, Williams was saddled with hefty monetary fines and a deducted point for behavior that is punished less severely in male athletes, if not embraced. In fact, she received a game penalty that put her down by a full loss of a game, which would be much more difficult to overcome to win. Not only did Ramos attack Williams at her intersections of gender and race, but he went in for the closer, probing at her motherhood, another social construct which is commonly overlooked when considering sites of oppression. In fact, he made the hegemonic assumption that mothers should be more focused on training their own children to be obedient to authority rather than demonstrating passion and strength to read their own goals, even if that means that they are not easily compliant with authority. On the court, Williams argued that Ramos treated her differently because of her identity as a woman; we agree and add that due to her intersectionality as a mother also, he attacked her at that specific intersection as well, because he could and because this is historically a site of oppression where women of color are policed, shamed, and stigmatized. In fact, these were some of the responses from media, cartoonists, and the general public upon viewing Williams' response to the referees. They characterized her response as the angry Black woman, and cartoonists even portrayed her in violent ways. This oppositional orientation was portrayed as problematic, rather than when portrayed by white men in the tennis world, who were presented as passionate and strong, which in no way diminished their representation as a super-star tennis player. Whereas, it has been clear that not only the referee responses, but also the societal responses are serving to minimize the achievements of Williams.

Motherhood Within the White Racial Frame

Within the white racial frame, Black women in particular, are framed as hypersexualized, angry, loud, and masculine (Crenshaw, 1989), and without the capacity for self-determination or self-protection, thus requiring paternalistic care (Feagin, 2010, p. 163). This narrative is further compounded for Black mothers who have historically been undermined in the societal good-bad motherhood trope, a binary that unjustly assumes that all mothers have equal economic and legal resources under the law and should conduct themselves in ways that justify stereotypes of motherhood (Murphy, 1998). Legal representations of motherhood specifically, have material consequences when one considers the policing of pregnant women of color who are criminalized and more harshly persecuted than their white counterparts (Roberts, 1991). In addition to a societal stigmatization of young mothers, existing intersectional work on Black teen mothers specifically, found a lack of evidence to substantiate the universalization of Black teen mothers' experiences as adverse for young children (Mantovani & Thomas, 2014). Latinx women similarly challenge the good-mother trope and negotiate motherhood through the axial points of race, class, gender but also immigration, often leading to what scholars have called transnational motherhood and alternative systems of caretaking (Hondangneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). Thus, we argue that motherhood is another social role that much more than being additive, provides a new layer by which women of color experience domination (Collins, 1990). Despite Williams' success in tennis, nicknamed the greatest athlete alive, her successful marriage, and her own wealth from a career spanning decades, she was subjected to the oppressive treatment

experienced by women of color who share in her identity as a mother.

Williams has been pigeonholed into the WRF for her entire career. From being hyper surveilled and sexualized on what she wears on the court (i.e. banned catsuit at French Open), to being compared physically to a man (Rankine, 2014). As the "angry black woman sub-frame" surfaced about Williams, we were reminded that Feagin (2010) asserts that, within this framing, "the primary emotional message is that Black folk are to be feared" (p. 110). The grotesque cartoonery and inflammatory social media commentary in relation to William's physique have been incessant for decades, it really was only a matter of time before a "verbal abuse" claim would be pegged onto Williams, not because she has displayed angry or loud behavior, but rather simply because she is a Black woman.

Williams is indeed being "framed" even in a domain in which many believe her to be most dominant, the tennis court. As a supplement to this white racial framing (Feagin, 2010) we suggest that women, specifically mothers, carry an additional intersectional site of vulnerability which is often overlooked — motherhood. This socially constructed site of intersectionality, which is specific to cis women but also to transwomen who may adopt this role, can be aggravated by additional socially constructed identities (race, class, gender, disability, immigration status, etc.) and as such, this site should most certainly be considered when unpacking infractions of injustice on women of color, both on and off of the court.

As a means to take a counterstance against this white racial framing, one that ignores the intersectional identities of women, in particular women of color, we need a counter-

narrative. We suggest that that narrative, through our lens as women of color and mothers, is that we see (by which acknowledging) Williams in all her powerful intersectional identities. Moreover, we see her actions to stand up for herself, to call out discrimination as a role model for us and for all women, including her own daughters. We see that she is fighting against injustice for herself on a worldwide stage under a microscope that amplifies all her actions. We argue that this further amplifies the opportunity for women of color to emulate new modes of voicing their opposition and fighting for their rights in the public sphere, to be treated as fully-human in all our sources of intersectionality.

Thus, our reaction to Serena was, “We see you, hermana.” We see you fully as woman, mother, athlete, and Black all at once. We felt as you cried, “this has happened to me too many times, this is unfair, this is because I am a woman.” We felt the jab of the umpire as he tried to quiet your objection by using your motherhood as a means to silence and undermine it and you. However, instead of the angry Black female, what we saw was a role model, someone who showed us how to face down discrimination, racism, sexism, and patriarchy. Serena, in all the athletic and social justice glory of that moment, spoke to our own daily frustrations with societal oppression of our intersectionality as women, as academics, as mothers, as Brown people, and as immigrants.

We see you, hermana!

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Notes

1. In 2009, fans witnessed Serena "become overcome with rage" and slam racket on the court, no doubt in an outward response to years of experiencing injustice on the tennis court (Rankine, 2014, p.25). In 2004, at the U.S. Open, chair umpire, Mariana Alves, was removed from officiated any more matches after making several bad calls against Serena, including foot fault calls, which are rarely called at critical moments in a match: "you don't make a call that can decide a match unless its flagrant," states tennis Official, Carol Cox (p.29). In the same vein, former tennis champion, now tennis commentator, John McEnroe expressed his awe given

how Serena was able to keep her composure after these stark injustices committed against her, time and time again.

4.

Expanding the Dialogues: Afro-Latinx Feminisms

Published on *Latinx Talk* on November 28, 2017

Petra Rivera-Rideau, Omaris Z. Zamora, Sandy Plácido, and Dixa Ramirez

Photo credit: Central Americas (Feb 1960) by davecito. October 12, 2012. CC BY 2.0

In recognizing and remembering the ongoing legacy of Black and Latinx feminisms we begin with a question: where can we talk about Afro-Latinx feminisms? In making a contribution to the dialogue on women of color feminisms we believe it's important to also recognize, remember, and give visibility to the ways that Afro-Latinx women experience, create, and theorize their own experiences. Hence, we respond to the question: What do Afro-Latinx Feminisms add to the conversation about the connections between Black and Latinx Feminisms?

Petra Rivera-Rideau:

I remember when I first found Angela Jorge's "The Black Puerto Rican Woman in Contemporary American Society," tucked in the back of the second edition of Edna Acosta-Belén's volume, *The Puerto Rican Woman: Perspectives on Culture, History, and Society*.[1] As a young Puerto Rican woman committed to combatting racism in my own community, this essay seemed profound. And yet, I hadn't encountered it in any of my classes dealing with Black or Latinx feminist theory, which tended to focus on the experiences of either African-Americans or mestiza Latinas. Even now, as I peruse sample syllabi on Black and Latinx feminism in preparation to teach my own course this spring, I rarely encounter Jorge or other Afro-Latinx writers despite their focus on blackness, Latinidad, and gender – questions at the very heart of these fields. But I am also not surprised. The very same issues that Jorge brings up around the invisibility of black Puerto Rican women ironically (or maybe not so ironically) appear to have relegated writings by women like Angela Jorge to the margins of our discussions about Latinx feminisms.

Like the work of many other Black and Latinx feminists, Angela Jorge's "The Black Puerto Rican Woman in Contemporary American Society" criticizes the racism within mainstream feminist movements that overlook the experiences and discrimination faced by women of color, but she calls out Puerto Rican feminists in particular for ignoring the persistence of racism within Puerto Rican communities. Jorge recounts stories of family pressures to "adelantar la raza" [improve the race] or navigate Eurocentric beauty standards. Jorge's stories are not unique; several other Afro-Puerto Rican women have all detailed issues related to family life, romantic

relationships, and beauty politics (among others) that impact individual women, and maintain antiblack racism within Puerto Rico and its diaspora.[2]

Consequently, Jorge argues that the feminist movement must tackle the issue of racism within the Puerto Rican community. She writes,

The black Puerto Rican woman is in a unique position since her oppression is threefold. She is oppressed because of her sex, cultural identity, and color. One would think that this three-sided oppression is sufficient; however, she is further oppressed by the act of omission or absence of literature addressing her needs. She is an endangered species which has attracted little attention or outcry from a concerned Puerto Rican professional community.[3]

For Jorge, at stake in this erasure is the "genocide" of black Puerto Rican women who may "assimilate" into African American communities, and thus no longer be connected "socially and emotionally with the Puerto Rican community."[4] While her argument may seem extreme, Jorge's underlying point – that the black Puerto Rican woman must "integrate the parts of herself – black, Puerto Rican, and woman – into a meaningful whole" – cogently demonstrates how antiblackness not only hinders the women's movement, but also Puerto Rican communities.

Angela Jorge's insistence on the recognition of racism within Latinx communities as critical to women's movements cannot be ignored. In fact, discussions of racism within Latinx communities are often fraught, something Jorge acknowledges: "For many, the title of this chapter will be unacceptable, since it will be perceived as divisive precisely at a time when the Puerto Rican people need to be united.

However, it seems to me that nothing can be more obviously divisive than the exclusion of this topic in particular and of the question of color in general from the debate on Puerto Rican identity on the mainland."[5] Like many places in Latin America, Puerto Rico's national identity is defined in part by race mixture. "La gran familia puertorriqueña", or the Great Puerto Rican Family, supposedly descends from African, Taíno, and Spanish ancestors who have allegedly co-existed without racial discrimination. This ideology carries over into Puerto Rican communities in the United States, where Latinidad more generally has been constructed as racially mixed and distinct from blackness.

I choose to have my own commentary summarize Jorge's work in order to lay bare the way her work has been too often excluded. Just as Jorge argued that black Puerto Rican women have been left out of feminist movements, our conversations about Latinx feminisms too often exclude the work of Jorge and other Afro-Puerto Rican feminist theorists. Moreover, this issue is also not unique to Puerto Ricans. Black communities have a long history throughout Latin America, where they face similar discourses of mestizaje that reproduce antiblack racism. In this context, the invisibility of Afro-Latinx feminist writers is hardly surprising. Oftentimes, calling attention to antiblack racism within Latinx communities has been met with accusations that one is imposing U.S. ideas about race into otherwise "racially harmonious" societies. However, Afro-Latinx feminisms are not necessarily copying African Americans; rather, they are writing from their own experiences and positionalities as black women within Latinx communities mired by the same global antiblackness that affects African American feminists. The fact that antiblack racism persists within many Latinx communities means that a feminist practice that advocates for all women cannot ignore racism

within its midst. For me, Afro-Latinx feminisms ensure that combatting racism in all forms, including within Latinx communities, is part and parcel of feminist actions for social justice.

Omaris Z. Zamora:

Black and Chicanx or Latinx women reclaim a feminist theory that re-centers the racialized woman's body, or as Cherrí Moraga describes, "a theory in the flesh".[6] A feminist theory in the flesh formed from the margins that highlights lived experience—from and through the body—and challenges the homeplace of racialized women is a political necessity. This is to say that, phenomenology and the body become a place from which to theorize.

But what bodies are accounted for? Which are not? To further extend our knowledge of these feminisms and the bodies from which its theories emerge when thinking specifically about issues of transnationalism, African diaspora, and the fluidity of identities: Where can we locate the AfroLatina body?[7] If we take this question as a point of departure, one would think it possible to refer to Black or Chicano feminist thought as theoretical framework to locate ourselves. Nonetheless, these frameworks have their limits or empty spaces where as AfroLatina women, we cannot locate ourselves. Chicano feminist thought—which has become a hegemonic feminist Latino thought— does not take black women into account outside of ways that are parenthetical or invoke a discourse of racial harmony. Meanwhile, trying to find ourselves within Black feminist thought is a complicated task due to its essentializing of blackness that does not open itself to the vast inclusion of Afro-descendants outside the United States. It concentrates on a racial construction in the United States that

complicates how we can understand AfroLatinx identity. Afro-Dominican writer and scholar Ana Maurine Lara highlights this perspective when she argues that:

> The spaces that Afro-Latinas in the United States occupy are undefined spaces that result from the ways in which race has been constructed in U.S. society. Because of these constructions, and the institutions built around them, many Afro-Latinas are often not seen by Black American nor by other Latinos. We must in turn push to be seen.[8]

Lara presents the invisibility and the identity negotiations that AfroLatina women must employ and, in specific, how they have yet to be recognized as an essential part of understanding the complexity of Latinx and Black identities. To locate an Afro-Latinx feminist thought we must obtain a fluid positionality that recognizes and articulates the many transformations that Afro-Latina women experience. AfroLatinx feminisms juxtapose Black and Latinx feminist scholarship by challenging the homogeneity of Black and Latinx identities as well as highlighting a transnational context that centers the African diaspora.

First-generation, working-class, or transnational AfroLatinas enter unchartered territory as black Latina women who do not fit the presumed mold of blackness or latinidad. Hence, it is central for us to acknowledge the necessary fluidity that our subjectivities rely on for survival and recognition. Being fluid means that you also recognize that blackness is not just African American. Recognizing fluidity means that the existence of the African diaspora or Afro-descendants throughout the world challenges our limited understanding of blackness. It means being black and being Dominican is possible. Being black and Brazilian is possible. It means that "Latino" is not a race. It means that we have to sit and think through dislocation,

displacement, and the ongoing movement of our bodies and our identities. What would it mean and look like to theorize from a black Latinx woman's flesh? I suggest that we, AfroLatinas, continue and contribute to the legacy of our Black and Latinx feminist genealogies and theorize from the flesh centering our experiences of transformation, transnational, and transient subjectivities that are in continuous transition from place to place.

AfroLatinx feminisms that recognize the complexity of black subjectivities can be a model that facilitate and further challenge Black and Latinx scholars to critically engage with discourses on nation and the multiplicities of blackness, gender, and sexuality. Employing these methods of literary, cultural, historical, and political analyses that are theorized from the flesh by centralizing the body can create a space within feminist scholarship that critically wrestles with rupture from within and beyond borders and challenges us to look closely at the archives that our racialized bodies create.

Sandy Plácido:

I define Afro-Latinx Feminisms as the intellectual and physical work that women who are of African and also Latin American descent do to increase their political power. Afro-Latinx Feminist genealogies have developed not only in the Americas, but around the world. In the simplest terms, Afro-Latinx feminists bring the histories and experiences of Latinxs and Latin Americans into spaces defined as Black, and they bring the histories and experiences of Blacks and Afro-descendants into spaces defined as Latinx. This statement is complicated by the fact that Blackness and Latinidad in the Americas have always been diverse, and so I would add that more than anything, Afro-Latinx feminists, and Afro-Latinxs

in general, reveal the intersectional and global realities that have existed in Black and Latinx communities all along.

Afro-Latinidad is not simply a recent trend that adds nuance and detail to Black and Latinx histories and experiences. Afro-Latinidad is the foundation for Blackness and Latinidad in the Americas. *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* edited by Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores includes several examples of Spanish-speaking Africans who traveled alongside Europeans to the Americas soon after Columbus landed in the Caribbean. There is the case of Esteban, a Spanish-speaking African who traveled with Cabeza de Vaca to Florida in the early 1500s, eventually making his way to what is now Mexico and the southwestern United States. Thus, the roots of contemporary Latinx communities in the United States are Black, and the roots of Black communities throughout the Americas are Spanish-speaking.

Turning to Afro-Latinx identity and its implications for political work today, Afro-Latinidad shifts depending on the situation, and is marked by multiplicity, simultaneity, and fluidity. As such, when Afro-Latinx feminists join movements and discussions that address the demands and experiences of Black or Latinx feminists, they may choose to mute or amplify their Afro-Latinidad. Although Afro-Latinidad has emerged as a political identity that captures the diverse roots of Afro-Latin American descendants around the world, it is worth noting that at times, one may identify simultaneously with the labels Afro-Latinx, Black, and Latinx, with only one or two of these terms, or with none of them at all.[9]

My research on Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, a physician and activist who promoted Puerto Rican liberation during the Cold War, is an example of an Afro-Latinx feminist who shifted her identity strategically depending on the movement space she inhabited.

After the African American activist, Vicki Garvin, failed to invite Cordero to a reunion of African Americans who had lived in Ghana in the early 1960s, Cordero wrote a letter to Garvin objecting to the exclusion of "all of us Afro-Americans from the Caribbean." Meanwhile, in the organizing materials that Cordero developed in Puerto Rico from the late 1960s to the 1980s, Cordero used different terms. She emphasized that she and her people were not only Puerto Rican, but also mulato and Caribbean, and she pushed members of the group to remember their African roots, as well as their connection to the African diaspora in the United States. Cordero advocated for these affiliations not only as a corrective to a white-washed Puerto Rican history, but in order to strengthen ties between Puerto Ricans and liberation movements around the world. Interestingly, Cordero did all of this as a white-presenting person herself. Thus, Afro-Latinx feminism pushes Black Feminism to be more expansive and inclusive in terms of location, language, but also color. Although colorism is absolutely real, with darker-skinned people bearing the brunt of global racial capitalism, Afro-Latinx Feminists make demands as, and on behalf of, lighter skinned black people who are deeply connected to the African diaspora historically and culturally.

While an expansive Black feminism matters at a strategic level, Afro-Latinx Feminisms must center the experiences of darker-skinned Afro-Latinxs, who push back on a Latinx community across the Americas that is steeped in white supremacy. This white supremacy is not only expressed by the lack of, whitening of, or caricaturization of black people in mainstream Latin American and Caribbean media, but also by the extreme structural violence faced by visibly black people in places such as the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Colombia, and every other country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, Afro-

Latinx Feminists work in dangerous and hostile circumstances to highlight the very obvious presence, contributions, and humanity of black people in Latin America and Latinx communities.

Afro-Latinxs draw from cultures and histories forged in Africa, Latin America, and in mixed, migrant communities around the world. As we move forward with an Afro-Latinx agenda, we must recognize that Afro-Latinx communities reside not only in the Americas, but in Europe and other parts of the world too. Afro-Latinx Feminism can lead the way as we determine how to navigate this intersectional and international organizing, because Afro-Latinx feminists have already been doing the work of negotiating and creating different axes of solidarity. I want to add that Black and Latinx Feminisms have not been oblivious to this intersectionality and the importance of a non-United States centered approach. Prominent Black Feminist leaders such as Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Claudia Jones had roots in the Caribbean and traveled widely, and Latinx feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga—in addition to being conscious of indigenous histories and experiences—also included the voices of Caribbean women and African Americans in their anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back*. However, the goal is to make the contributions of Afro-Latinx Feminists, past and present, as recognizable as those of the Black and Latinx activists and intellectuals I just mentioned. Nancy Raquel Mirabal's new book, S*uspect Freedoms: The Racial and Sexual Politics of Cubanidad in New York, 1823-1957*, introduced me to pioneering figures such as Africa Céspedes and Melba Alvarado that should be a part of not just our Afro-Latinx canon, but our feminist canon. As you read this, there are Afro-Latinx feminists working for justice around the world. We must acknowledge them, listen

to them, and give them their rightful place in our histories and futures.

Dixa Ramirez:

I often wonder how it has been possible for so much scholarship about the Americas, including American studies, Latinx and Latin American studies, and African diaspora studies, to proceed without attention to the experiences, contributions, or even existence of black Latinx subjects. But what excites me most about black Latinx studies, and especially the work driven by Afro-Latinx feminisms, is what there is after, before, or beyond representation.

Most of us concerned with Afro-Latinx feminisms would probably agree that representation matters, especially because black Latinas have been erased, whitewashed, or celebrated for specific cultural contributions without accompanying political and historical inclusion. However, as Peggy Phelan cautions, "while there is a deeply ethical appeal in the desire for a more inclusive representational landscape and certainly under-represented communities can be empowered by an enhanced visibility, the terms of this visibility often enervate the putative power of these identities."[10] Heeding this warning, how do we satiate our thirst for stories of influential black Latinx subjects while also producing the more radical work that the framework of Afro-Latinx feminisms inspires? Can we remain attentive to the Dominican Studies Center's research about Jan Rodriguez, a 17th century "mulatto" from Hispaniola and the first non-native settler in Manhattan, as well Jack Forbes's work on the black Latinxs who founded the first California missions, without perpetuating patriarchal, Eurocentric frameworks? While these cases subvert paradigms in which only white men propel history, they also propagate phallocentric definitions of

civilization and progress as tied to land partition, labor, and capital accumulation.

There are varied responses to this dilemma, as the other responses in this roundtable demonstrate. It can include, for instance, a return to the work of ignored black Latina scholars who illuminate the exclusion of blackness in nationalist contexts (Rivera-Rideau); a reconsideration of how Afro-Latinx feminism can illuminate corners darkened even within Latinx feminist work (Zamora); and the pan-Africanist efforts of a white-presenting Latina activist such as Ana Livia Cordero (Plácido). In my forthcoming book, *Colonial Phantoms: Belonging and Refusal in the Dominican Americas, from the 19th century to the Present*, I chew over the question of how the very erasure of certain forms of blackness, specifically Dominican blackness, structures the Americas. That is, this erasure itself forms part of the scaffolding of this hemisphere. To inquire what it means to be American, Latin American, Latinx, Puerto Rican—and concomitantly, what it means to be a citizen versus stateless, a refugee versus an undocumented immigrant, a "protected" female body versus a female body that can be violated with impunity (and for profit)—and so on, is to already get at questions beyond representation. When we point out that the world as we know it was shaped by black Latinx subjects as settlers (in all their problematic glory), merchants, writers, artists, and in every possible subject and labor category, we are also rejecting Western ideals of who is fully human. Considering the violent costs of dehumanization, how can we not desire to do so?

And yet, inspired by the work of Afro-Latinx feminisms and other branches of African diasporic thought, I find myself wondering about those spaces beyond (or before, underneath, after?) representation. I am excited by the work of Afro-Latinx

artists and scholars, and others working in this field, who engage with issues of subterfuge, surveillance, and various forms of visibility. I think of the women I write about in *Colonial Phantoms*, including the nineteenth-century poet Salomé Ureña and the present-day authors and performers Chiqui Vicioso, Amara la Negra, and Maluca Mala. I also think of the incredible interventions of Afro-Dominican artist Firelei Báez, whose pieces centralize how blackness and femininity intersect with canonical Western (patriarchal and Eurocentric) imaginaries.For about a year, I have been grappling with a large cache of early twentieth-century photographs that portray Dominicans in strange, almost nonsensical ways. These images and their captions nudge me away from searching for what I can clearly articulate, see, and understand. Perhaps my question is not so much "what is there beyond representation?" but, instead, "how do black Latinx subjects elide hardened racial and ethnic categories?" Reid-Pharr writes: "Thus enslaved and colonized people must remain particularly attentive to the art of dissimulation, the art produced from within the lie of an always already deadened human subjectivity."[11] Terms such as dissimulation, subterfuge, and elision subtly reveal what I am trying to get at. What is the value of representation when black Latinx subjects have a history of dissimulation in order to slip away from white supremacist surveillance? As such, I am not rejecting projects of representation and visibility, per se, but expressing a hunger for what is difficult to articulate. What if we look beyond the "commonsense" of identifying important "firsts," and embrace the nonsense that might not even be recognizable human, or, more to the point Human (as in the Enlightenment model of Manhood)? Might this line of inquiry lead us towards an "ecumenically human [that is, homo sapiens] interpretation," to cite Sylvia Wynter, that, in our current moment, might help save us from total environmental and

political catastrophe[12] Can we afford to move away from the work of redress and representation and think much more broadly about what it means to be human? Can we afford not to, considering the impending environmental and political catastrophes that face us? On the other hand, in this era of anti-Latinx immigration, Black Lives Matter, white domestic terrorism, and the Trump administration, I'm just not sure. As the conversation in this roundtable demonstrates, the two impulses are likely entangled.

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Notes

1. See *The Puerto Rican Woman: Perspectives on Culture, History, and Society*, ed. Edna Acosta-Belén, 180-187. 2nd edition. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986.
2. See Lillian Comas-Díaz, "LatiNegra: Mental Health Issues of African Latinas," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 5.3-4 (1994): 35-74; Marta I. Cruz-Janzen, "Latinegras: Desired Women: Undesirable Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, and Wives." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 22.3 (2001): 168-183; Maritza. Quiñones Rivera, "From Trigueñita to Afro-Puerto Rican: Intersections of the Racialized, Gendered, and Sexualized Body in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Mainland." *Meridians:*

Feminism, Race, Transnationalism 7.1 (2006): 162-182.

3. Jorge, “The Black Puerto Rican Woman,” 183.
4. Ibid., 182.
5. Ibid., 181.
6. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back* (Watertown: Persephone Press, 1981), 23.
7. The lack of the hyphen here is intentional for AfroLatinx to convey that blackness should always be considered as part of Latinidad. Specifically, for my own positionality our blackness should not be separate from our Latinidad.
8. Ana Lara, "Bodies and Memories: Afro-Latina Identities in Motion," *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latina Diaspora*, eds. Marta Moreno Vega, M. Alba, and Y. Modestin (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2012), 23.
9. For more on how individuals shift and negotiate their identities in different settings, see Gayatri Spivak’s work on “strategic essentialism.”
10. Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.
11. Reid-Pharr, in *Archives of Flesh: African America, Spain, and Post-Humanist Critique* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 78, emphasis mine.
12. Wynter, “1492: A New World View,” in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, edited by Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 38.

5.

Moral Panic! At Halftime: Legacies of the Latin Boom Meet Gendered and Regional Latinidades

Published on *Latinx Talk* on April 7, 2020

María Elena Cepeda

On February 2nd, 2020, roughly 103 million global television viewers witnessed perhaps the most hotly discussed Latina/o/x live musical event since the electrifying performance of "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin at the 1999 Grammys. More than twenty years after Martin's memorable performance, the spectacular Latinidad on display this year was distinctly female, Colombian, and Puerto Rican: Shakira and Jennifer Lopez headlined the Super Bowl halftime show, making them the first two

Photo credit: Jennifer Lopez in Concert by Etiënne Ripzaad. October 2012. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International

Latinas in history to perform on it together (US Cuban Gloria Estefan enjoys the distinction of being the first Latina to ever headline the show not once but twice; first in Minnesota (1992) and then in her hometown of Miami (1999)). Like most popular phenomena, this year's halftime show was shot through with contradictions and competing tensions. We can most completely account for the show's dynamics when we consider it through the following distinct yet overlapping perspectives: by means of a longer historical view; via an analysis of Latinidad, and inter-Latina/o/x dynamics; through a focus on the articulation of regional Colombian identity within the context of the halftime show; and via an examination of the moral panic that the performance provoked amongst many middle class, white female viewers in particular.

Photo credit: Shakira by Claudio Pozo. November 21, 2006. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Much like the Latin music and media "boom" that initially ushered in the emergence of both Shakira and Lopez as household names more than twenty years ago – a period characterized by marketers' attempts to index and profitably harness the economic, political, and cultural influence of the nation's rapidly expanding Latina/o/x population – this year's halftime show relied on well-worn historic tropes regarding Latina gender and sexuality to appeal to non-Latina/o/x audiences. Indeed, while in some regards visually fresh and sonically arresting, the show

exhibited a deep familiarity characteristic of cultural texts that reference representational frameworks in which global audiences are already fluent: the Latina dancer gifted with "natural" rhythm; the sensual, curvaceous Latina physical form; and the Latina whose presence is marked by a seemingly innate expression of hypersexuality. Moreover, much like the preceding "Latin booms" that dotted the twentieth century cultural landscape, the Super Bowl halftime performance materialized at a time of heightened public discourse regarding the growing Latina/o/x population and its increasing political, cultural, and economic influence. Characterized by profound xenophobia, ethno-nationalism, and expanding income inequality, the Trump Era, much like previous Latin booms, warns us of the folly of simplistically conflating the power of media visibility and audibility with genuine political clout.

From a global music industry perspective, the inclusion of urban music stars Bad Bunny (from Puerto Rico) and J. Balvin (from Colombia) in the performance underscores the centrality of reggaetón and trap in the current Latin music industry, as well as the power of Puerto Rico and Colombia as key production centers in global Latina/o/x urban music. We cannot ignore the potent symbolism of having two white/light-skinned individuals such as J. Balvin and Bad Bunny occupying the stage to perform a musical genre that has historically been associated with sharp critiques of anti-Blackness. Much like the most recent Latin boom of the late 1990s, at this year's Superbowl we witnessed the white face of the Caribbean, ironically in the midst of constant musical and kinesthetic references to the region's Afro-diasporic cultural production. I would note here the strong critiques of the show's privileging of Latina/o/x whiteness that quickly emerged from Latina scholars, such as Petra Rivera-Rideau, who questioned the effectiveness of Lopez and Shakira's calls for Latina/o/x

unity within a context in which only a small fraction of that same community was racially represented. In a similar vein, I cite the words of Zaire Dinzey-Flores, who stated: "I'd suggest that the performance exhibits the seduction of whiteness and the continual ability for non-Black Latinas/os/xs to imagine a world where Blackness is part and parcel of their community and not a root or influence." While Jennifer Lopez and Shakira certainly share some of the responsibility for the problematic racial dynamics of the show, singularly focusing our discontent on them as individuals inadvertently robs some much-needed nuance from any consideration of the structural issues at hand. When addressing the question of just how and why gendered white Latinidad has been centered in mainstream media representations once more, we need to think in terms of interlocking institutions and capitalistic systems such as the music industry, mainstream US media outlets such as Fox Sports, Latina/o/x-centered media, Jay Z's Roc Nation, and the NFL, among others. Those collectivities bring to bear enormous power and influence – more so than any individual actors, be they superstars or not, particularly within an entertainment industry and mainstream media culture that hypervalorizes heterosexual cis-gendered masculinity, whiteness, and the cultural production of the Anglo Global North.

When read relationally through the prism of Latinidad, we can note the more overt political stances adopted by Jennifer Lopez, such as her use of the Puerto Rican flag, and the sampling of Bruce Springsteen's classic "Born in the USA" as performed by a large group of young girls wearing bedazzled US flags emerging from prop cages, led by Lopez's own daughter. Framed by an overhead shot of the main stage lit up by the Venus symbol, this segment of the performance suggested that it is precisely Latinas who possess the power

to effect change in the present political context. We must also consider Lopez's exhortation at this moment in the performance for Latinas/os/xs to "get loud," a phrase that simultaneously recalls her early hit "Let's Get Loud" off of her 1999 debut album On the 6, just as it faintly echoes James Brown's 1968 Black Power funk anthem "Say it Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud" (which, much like the halftime show, was also a performance that emerged during a period of profound ethno-racial, cultural, and political upheaval in the US).

As a US Colombian, Shakira on the other hand requires the representational frameworks of Latinidad in order to remain legible to non-Latina/o/x and even many Latina/o/x viewers, most of whom have little understanding of the visual and musical cues associated with Colombian identities. Shakira's more subtle identity markers, as exemplified by her use of the greeting "Hola Miami!" at the beginning of the show – a gesture that discursively identified Florida as a US Colombian, as well as a US Puerto Rican and generally Latina/o/x space – also included the incorporation of various uniquely Colombian and specifically costeño/a/x (of the Colombian Caribbean) musical genres and references. Even in a performance that generally underscored the centrality of Colombian contributions to global popular culture – indeed, both Lopez and Shakira were flanked by racially diverse Colombian dance troupes, and the aforementioned J. Balvin made a noteworthy appearance – in some regards the uniquely Colombian and costeña/o/x facets of the show remained illegible to many, including other Latinas/os/xs. One primary example of this illegibility that surfaced in public responses to Shakira's performance was the erroneous reading of the high-pitched, warbling cry (known in the Arab world as a zaghrouta) that she released at a key point in the show. Captured in an endless

series of memes picturing Shakira with her tongue out and peering into the camera, many viewers interpreted the sonic gesture as a form of sexual display. Those familiar with Colombian regional cultures, however, quickly recognized the zaghrouta as emblematic of Shakira's deep roots in the large Lebanese-origin population of Barranquilla, the largest city of the country's northern Caribbean coast. Within that specific regional context, Shakira is best understood as a diasporic subject two times over: she is the daughter of two migrants and a migrant herself, a positionality frequently witnessed in Colombia's Caribbean port cities, yet one that may also go mis- or un-recognized due to viewers' lack of knowledge regarding the unique specificities of Colombian culture. As what Angharad Valdivia has referred to as a "radical hybrid" Latina subject, Shakira thus persists, much like the Colombian diaspora, as paradoxically hypervisible yet unseen in her ethno-racial complexity and regional specificity.

Juxtaposed against the racial tensions of the post-Colin Kaepernick National Football League and the rampant anti-Latina/o/x sentiment of the Trump era, white, female middle-class concerns about the ostensibly "vulgar" spectacle of two unapologetically sexy and talented Latinas comprised a noteworthy, if unsurprising, reaction to the halftime performance. In what constituted a veritable moral panic, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) received more than 1,300 consumer complaints of vulgarity in the days following the program (a significant number but one that still pales in comparison to the more than 540,000 FCC complaints registered by the public in the aftermath of Janet Jackson's 2004 Super Bowl halftime "wardrobe malfunction" – not coincidentally, an incident involving the accidental exposure of a Black female performer's breast). Registering dominant fears of potential Latina/o/x demographic and cultural

ascendancy, these responses included comments forwarded to me by one Latina contact in Italy who witnessed white female US nationals online classifying the halftime performance as "pornography" harmful to "young boys," and as an invitation to human sex traffickers, among other comments. Such discourse, which abounded in the days after the Superbowl, illustrates the enduring global power of media representations historically linking gendered Latinidad to hypersexuality. Simultaneously, they reflect long-standing cultural norms that prize white, middle-class Anglo femininity over women of color subjectivities – evidence of the fact that for many in the white majority, even light-skinned Latinas exist beyond the boundaries of "true" femininity. These reactions to the halftime show exemplify how gendered bodies are unevenly policed across ethno-racial categories. This includes the bodies of Shakira and Jennifer Lopez, whose claims to whiteness are still provisional in the eyes of many non-Latinas/os/xs.

Given the tumultuous US political and cultural context in which it was situated, this year's halftime performance by Jennifer Lopez and Shakira was never going to be just another show. Indeed, we might concede that in the risk-adverse US music industry, nothing about it was unplanned or left to chance, including the strong uptick in streams and sales that both artists enjoyed in its aftermath. Blackness, Latinidad, and Arab American gendered identities materialized in the show as overlapping constructs worthy of examination for their own historical, cultural, and political specificity. Yet concurrently, these identities were often flattened or erased in the performance and audience reception of it, reflecting the ways in which difference is often managed within mainstream US media and society at large. This leads to the questions: What would Latina/o/x Studies pedagogies and scholarship that move beyond an understanding of Latina/o/x identity as a

simple question of "Spanish + Indigenous + African" look like? What proactive steps must scholars and consumers of Latina/o/x popular media take to decenter whiteness in our everyday analyses of Latinidad? How do we approach the emergent study of South American-origin populations in a manner that respects their specificity, yet does not fall into the often rigid nationalistic paradigms of traditional Latina/o/x Studies approaches? And how might we critique Latina/o/x popular culture in a measured manner that acknowledges its shortcomings, while simultaneously recognizes its contributions? Fortunately, the 2020 Superbowl halftime show and its stars offer us a rich opportunity to address these vital questions, and many more.

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6.

Dear Latines: Your Antiblackness Will Not Save You

Published on *Latinx Talk* on November 11, 2020

Michaela Machicote

Photo credit: Vidas Negras Importan – George Floyd protest in Harrisburg, PA by Paul Weaver. May 30, 2020. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Dear Latines,[1] your antiblackness will not save you. Your aspirations to whiteness are deadly (RIP Trayvon Martin; RIP Philando Castile); not just for the Black communities you seek so much to distance yourselves from, but also for those in your family who will never be welcomed into the "American Dream" (RIP Andres Guardado). It is time you reckoned with the following facts: Latines are not a monolith and never have been. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonization, imperialism (and later on white supremacist political projects like Blanqueamiento[2]) made Latines a multi-ethnic, multicultural group of peoples that run the gamut from indigenous, Black, Asian, to white, and mixed with all of the above. We come from different national contexts,

and also racial contexts, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic backgrounds as well. The assumption that we are all one "hive mind" when it comes to how we view social and political unrest in this country is not only false but dangerous. It is dangerous because those of us who walk in this world as phenotypically Black, Indigenous, darker-skinned, queer, womyn, and disabled (from marginalized backgrounds) experience this unrest in very different and often violent ways than others who are lighter-skinned, racially ambiguous, white, cishet, or abled.

The summer of 2020 has been one of visible social unrest for U.S. Black communities struggling against the state violence that plagues Black, Indigenous, and people of color. I was not surprised to learn of physical, antiblack attacks during the protests of the state-sanctioned murder of George Floyd. Nor was I shocked to learn that in Chicago, Mexican gangs and some residents of the predominantly Mexican southside area of Pilsen targeted Black men, women, and children who drove or walked through the area. As an Afro-Puerto Rican woman who has attended events in Pilsen, I have experienced gang intimidation and felt unwelcome during community events offered to "Latinas." It was clear that these events did not consider Black Latinas part of their community audience. I was also not surprised to read about Dominicans in New York beating up random Black men because they assumed these Black people were there to loot and tear down their communities. Of course, the Dominican Republic has its own historical context of antiblackness. The antiblackness in these actions is glaringly clear: the assumption that the Black people in these neighborhoods were criminal and did not belong there served to distinguish between who is Latine and who is not. To do so, it had to erase Blackness from Latinidad. For far too many Latines, Black lives do not matter because they have

convinced themselves that Blackness has no real place in Latinidad, and this must change.

For me these actions only served to reify what I learned early on, both experiencing and navigating in the Midwest: that antiblackness is a global phenomenon taught and ingrained in the Latine community.[3] In Chicago and Milwaukee, other Puerto Ricans often told me that I couldn't be Puerto Rican because I was Black. I even encountered Black, non-Latine people who didn't know Afro-Latines existed. I come from a family of Black Puerto Ricans. Even in 2020, Puerto Ricans and other Latines ask me if I am "mixed" with "Black and Puerto Rican." Residential segregation and the tension around the competition for scarce resources in poor Black and Brown communities, coupled with the lack of education on people of color histories taught in public schools exacerbate this ignorance. This pushed me into what has been a lifelong journey of study on the origins of the belief that Latinidad and Blackness are mutually exclusive. Through years of research and constant conversation with Latines, I found that the origins of this belief are both Latin America itself and the United States.

Racial Discourse in Latin America

In Latin America, Afro-Latines have occupied a liminal space. Their limited visibility usually comes in recurring tropes: a celebration of African cultural influence on music, song, dance, food, or a hypervisibility linked to policing and assumed criminality (Godreau 2002; Dinzey Flores 2013). The prevalence of mestizaje (racial mixture) celebrated throughout Latin America has ignored not only the very existence of Afro-Latinidad as a political and cultural identity, but has also led to the assumption in the United States that there is mutual

exclusivity between Blackness and Latinidad. This assumption ignores the histories of colonialism and slavery in Latin America. For decades, Afro-Latines have been challenging the rhetoric of mestizaje and racial utopia, pushing for political representation and social mobility, and also fighting for rights transnationally.

Race has informed social hierarchies in Latin America and the United States since colonial contact and the creation of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (Reid Andrews 2016). Within the U.S., the understanding of race has been through a dichotomous lens of nonwhite and white. Antiblackness is deeply embedded into the fabric of society and the conceptualization of non-whiteness. In Latin America, racial hierarchies stemmed from the early Spanish "casta" (caste) system which categorized racial mixture, often assigning degrading, animal names to non-white mixed-race individuals. These racial categories were also accompanied by "pigmentocracies" (Lipschutz 1944; Telles 2014), or hierarchies based on skin color and proximity to whiteness. Pigmentocracies rooted in antiblackness and anti-indigenous sentiments still prevail in Latin America, determining the privileges people are afforded. Race-mixing in Latin America is often presented as a utopian counternarrative to racism. The truth is that Latin America is the perfect example of why miscegenation will not end racism or antiblackness.

While many Latines accuse people in the US of "importing" or "imposing" US racial beliefs onto Latin America, this ignores the fact that just as people travel, so too do their beliefs, ideologies, and prejudices. Some Latin Americanists have examined the way Latin American nations have emphasized both homogenous national identity and the absence of de jure segregation (Jim Crow-like laws) across the region as proof

of the lack of racism and thus harmonious (and superior) race relations in Latin America (Reid Andrews 2016; Rodríguez-Silva 2012; Wade 2010; Dzidzienyo et al 2005). Within discourses of mestizaje, the notion of mestizaje is inherently and often explicitly about whitening through race mixture (Rodríguez-Silva, 2012; Telles 2014). These practices of racial hierarchization and anti-blackness in Latin America–despite the absence of Jim Crow legalized racial segregation–are so readily embraced and practiced by (recent migrant and diasporic) Latines in the United States. Analysis of historical and contemporary state-sanctioned practices of anti-blackness in Latin America–specifically blanqueamiento–exposes common expressions of racial bias in Latin American society such as mejorando/avanzando la raza. For example, Tanya K. Hernández's research on legal archives like marriage records demonstrates how the state explicitly encouraged miscegenation yet also maintained segregation by barring people of African descent from political and societal power in Latin America (Hernandez 2012).

The proof that race is also a preoccupation in Latin America (Mintz 1989; Wade 1997; Torres and Whitten 1998; Duany 1998; and Rivero 2002) can be found in the fact that there are dozens of ways to talk about Blackness or describe Blackness phenotypically, without actually saying the word "Negro/a." As an example, in Puerto Rico, I could be called "euphemisms such as mulata, jabà/grifa (high yellow)": "grifa" is kinky haired, fair-skinned, more European features and "Jaba" is kinky haired, light-skinned, more African features, depending on the perception of the person (Santos-Febres 2001[4];Jorge 1979, 134–35). However, understandings of race in the US have undergone (and slowly continue to undergo) changes that generate space for conversation regarding complex racial identities and the incorporation of various ethnic groups into

the binary racial schema of white and non-white (Bonilla Silva 2004).

I find the rhetoric of mestizaje that proclaims that "we are all mixed" extremely violent and that it erases the lived experiences of visibly Black and indigenous Latines. Aside from the fact that not all Latines are mixed, it ignores two very real facts: 1. While some of us may be inevitably mixed racially, the stories behind that mixture have often been violent. The violence lies in the rape of our ancestors by European enslavers and oppressors, in the violence behind being forced to reproduce as an enslaved person with whomever the enslaver chose, and the violence of internalized antiblackness or anti-indegeneity that pushed our forebears to want to "better the race" so that their children would not suffer racism and societal exclusion. 2. Even if we are racially mixed, due to the reasons listed above, we don't all experience "mixedness" or racism the same way. Additionally, contrary to popular opinion, being Latine does not automatically make you a person of color. You can be racially white, and belong to a Latine group. You can walk in this world, privileged (and often protected) because of that whiteness, or proximity to whiteness if you are "mestize" and light-skinned. Being "whitine" means that while you may face a racialized form of xenophobia because of your ethnic background, it most certainly is not because of your skin color. People see white before they know you are Latine. Visibly Black Latines do not have that privilege.

Black Lives Matter Globally

In the U.S. where Latines and African Americans live in proximity, it has been possible for some Latines to begin to understand their identity and Blackness differently than they

possibly would in Latin America. This close relationship has also helped to expand African American's understanding of Blackness in the Diaspora. Contact between Latines and African Americans have made it possible for Latines to unpack the racial stigmas and silences with which they've lived. Latines and Black Americans have both experienced extreme racial and ethnic discrimination and violence in the US, which begs the question, why aren't we natural allies, accomplices in the fight to end white supremacy? Both communities suffer from various forms of state violence that have kept us poor, undereducated, underemployed, and in unstable communities so divested and gentrified that we can't afford to own the property we (you) harmed Black bodies to protect. Until our global Latine community understands that Black Lives Matter, we are no better than the white supremacists that hate us, and we will not overcome the systemic oppressions killing us all. This is more than just a call for Latine communities to "self-reflect" and pay lip service to anti-racism. As stated previously, antiblackness is not unique to the U.S. "Las Vidas Negras Importan" and "Vidas Negras Importam" reflect the growing global fight for Black liberation in the face of state-sanctioned antiblackness that all too frequently results in discrimination and murder. Both in the US and abroad, we must understand, address, and undo the myriad ways we are complicit in the oppression of Black communities by supporting and fighting alongside those who seek to dismantle systems of oppression.

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Notes

1. I use the word “Latine” to indicate the gender neutral language many individuals, activists, and scholars in Latin American and the Latin American diaspora are embracing to disrupt binary gender norms. I specifically employ the “e” rather than the “x” due to the linguistic ease and natural flow of the vowel sound versus the hard, Anglophone “x” sound, or “equis” pronunciation in Spanish.
2. the social, economic, and political practice of miscegenation to whiten up the racial makeup of a country
3. See Tanya K. Hernandez’s article “'Too Black to be Latino/a:' Blackness and Blacks as Foreigners in Latino Studies.”
4. Santos-Febres, Mayra. 2001. “Por Cientos contranatura.” *Mirador*. El Nuevo Día, 6 May.

7.

Embracing Nepantla Amidst Midwestern Borderscapes in the Time of #45

Published on *Latinx Talk* on October 24, 2017

Gabriela Spears-Rico

Photo credit: DC Women's March by Liz Lemon. January 21, 2017. CC0 1.0

"The U.S-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds." – Gloria Anzaldúa

Now more than ever, we the racialized, the bodies constructed as "illegal," the undesirable children, the grotesquely fertile mujeres, the bad hombres, eternal aliens to a country we helped build and have sanitized with our sweat, we the field-workers to the population we feed, the servile class which manufactures commodities we can't afford — we feel the *herida abierta*. 2017 has been open season to racially profile Latinxs as "suspiciously illegal." In February when #45's deportation efforts commenced, 680 people were detained across twelve states.[1] Among them were people who were

checking in with immigration authorities, DREAMers, mothers and fathers without criminal records – folks who fit the mold of the "good immigrant." This violence feels eerily familiar – it is like pouring salt on the *herida abierta*. We see, you #45! Feverishly competing with President Obama's deportation machine, racing for the title of Deporter-In-Chief.

The xenophobia that provoked #45's election has not been unknown in the U.S. Our mestizaje is the stuff that white supremacist nightmares are made of. Anti-Latinx racism, which relies on the perception of Latinxs as foreign, racially mixed "illegals," is a driving force behind the deportation regime and behind inhumane immigration policies.[2]

Fear of the mongrel "Mexican race" has historically fed the hysteria about Latinx people tainting the WASP American racial fabric.[3] The language fueling #45's victory with a sector of the white working class and white women demonstrates that the racialization of Latinxs that began with Manifest Destiny in the 19th Century persists today.

And it is more than ever apparent that none of us are safe. While *la migra* may have warrants for specific people, we are all being policed by both the deportation regime and by domestic white supremacist terrorism. This year's deportation attempts shows us that our liberation is intertwined no matter our status. In 2017, DACA recipients and Latinxs who are U.S. citizens were arrested and held in ICE detention. Even Latinxs who supported #45 like Oceanside minister Jorge Ramirez are facing deportation.[4] As long as we're racialized as a group, neither the status symbols we may have attained nor the strides we've made for social justice will spare us from being criminalized

by ICE or help us appear more human before this administration. #45's abhorrent response to Puerto Ricans in the wake of Hurricane Maria demonstrates that our racialization outweighs our humanity to this administration –even when we are U.S. citizens.[5]

As a dark-skinned Mexicana, I know as I navigate the Twin Cities and our adjoining suburbs that my privileges of having "papers," middle-class status, and a Ph.D. do not exempt me from the impact of xenophobia and white supremacy. While I've typically dressed professionally in university settings, I have been mistaken as service staff at two Midwestern universities. At two Minnesota institutions where I provided customer service, white customers did not believe my answers until my white colleagues repeated the same responses to their questions. White co-workers often exchanged names and shook hands with each other while literally looking beyond me. In the pool of Minnnesota Niceness, I often feel like I'm swimming against the current to prove my humanity.[6]

As a transplant to the Midwest, I know that Minnesota Nice does not keep my family or me safe. I was unable to call upon it for salvation on election night when fireworks celebrating #45's victory awakened my daughter, and the fear of violence terrified me. And at the performance of *West Side Story* at the St Paul Ordway, I heard the audience repeatedly laugh at the cast's utterances of the word "spic" without inclusion of context for the slur or a Latinx critique of the play's portrayal of Puerto Ricans in the program. Unfortunately, my Chicanx/Latinx students experienced the same unwelcoming treatment last fall when the College Republicans painted the words "Build the Wall" on a bridge that runs through the University of Minnesota.

The truth is that as Latinxs who inhabit predominantly white spaces, we navigate our privilege and our Latinidad with an awareness of the precarity of our inclusion. Ignoring racism can be as psychologically damaging as the overt white supremacist violence that Nathan Gustavson and his three friends inflicted by shooting Black Lives Matters protestors during the 4th precinct takeover caused by the police shooting of Jamar Clarke.[7] I also recognize that as Latinxs, we have made a convenient wager with whiteness, sometimes strategically buying into anti-Blackness as Officer Jeronimo Yanez did when he defended his actions in killing Philando Castile in front of his girlfriend and her child.

We must realize that even in a place with a triangulated racial landscape like Minnesota, striking a deal with a whiteness that still views us as others will not spare our humanity. A quick look at the Facebook page of any local news outlet reveals multiple statements against people of color and racist stereotyping of Black, Latinx, Asian, Muslim, and Native people by Minnesotans, such as "concerns" over a Muslim takeover, Black inferiority, and immigrant leeches. These are our neighbors, doctors, teachers, attorneys, fellow bus-riders, and restaurant goers who are as threatened by our presence as Samuel Huntington was when he wrote *Who Are We?*[8]

In the midst of facing a new deportation regime, we can weaponize our hybridity and mestizaje to resist. For Gloria Anzaldúa, mestizx subjectivity is productive and powerful due to its ability to live in *nepantla*.[9] The *neplanterxs*' productivity can be illustrated by their ability to be border-crossers and bridge-builders. As she states, "Transformations occur in this in-between space, an

unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries…Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it's become a sort of 'home.'"[10]

In other words, during a time when our bodies are read as trangressively hybrid and criminal regardless of where we live in the country (or what we do), –"*to live in the borderlands means you*"[11] — being 2,000 miles away from the U.S.-Mexico border does not allow Midwestern Latinxs to escape the racialization attached to our perceived illegality. I propose that owning our intersectionality as powerful, our mestizaje as cultural capital, and our hybridity as a means to defend our humanity counters the notion that living in/with the herida abierta is crippling. We can use our liminality as mestizx to practice nepantlerismo – to inhabit our privileged spaces as coyote tricksters and scholar-activists who employ the privileges we are granted to limit the deportation regime.

Because we are all targets and it is our neighbors, primxs, tias and friends who are being hauled off, we must not comply with the deportation machine. We must question it at every moment, document its violence and shortcomings, and resist being bystanders. In Minneapolis, we can look towards the admirable actions of Boricua artist Ricardo Levins Morales when he questioned a police officer's authority to ask a Latino passenger on the lightrail about his immigration status. Morales stayed with the targeted man, recorded the conversation with the officer, and posted the story to social media.[12] In that spirit, I encourage us to be the coyote border-crossers and liminal neplanterxs that defy the borderscapes.

Being deemed as "illegal" during a time when our greatest

aggressors are pardoned, while our children are told not to dream, means that we need to intentionally resist. It calls us to become traffickers in freedom, traffickers of *la palabra*, dealers of scholarship that empowers and exposes during a time of silencing and censorship. As a neplanterx collective, we can limit the racialization that profits from the violence committed against our bodies—one that relies on our construction as racial others and continues to question our humanity.

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Notes

1. Elise Foley. "Trump Deportation Raids Pick Up More than 680 People, Government Says," *The Huffington Post*, February 13, 2017.
2. For further reading on the relationship between the racialization of Latinx people and immigration policy, see Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond*, (New York: Routledge, 2010); Lynn Stephens, *Transborder Lives*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Kelly Little Hernandez., *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

3. See Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).
4. Kate Morrisey, "Oceanside Minister supported Trump, now he faces deportation," *The San Diego Tribune*, June 30, 2017.
5. After San Juan mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz publicized a call for help for Puerto Ricans affected by Hurricane Maria, President Trump said that Puerto Ricans "want everything done for them," called Mayor Cruz "nasty," trivialized the death toll in Puerto Rico after Maria, and threw rolls of paper towels at Puerto Ricans affected by the hurricane. These events and #45's use of language toward Puerto Ricans are replete with racist undertones towards Latinxs, including stereotypes of our unsanitariness, laziness, and the notion that our deaths (even those of Latinxs who are American citizens) are not as noteworthy as the deaths of others. See Daniella Diaz and Eli Watkins, "San Juan Mayor: I hope Trump Stops 'Spouting Out' Comments That Hurt Puerto Rico's People," *CNN*, October 3, 2017; Alexia Fernandez, "Donald Trump Throws Paper Towels At Hurricane Maria Survivors As He Tours Devastated Puerto Rico," *People*, October 3, 2017.
6. For further reading on the Latinx experience in Minnesota, see *The Latina/o Midwest Reader*, ed. Omar Valerio-Jiménez, Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, and Claire F. Fox, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
7. Brandt Williams, "Jamar Clarke's protest shooter's friend pleads guilty," *MPR News*, June 12, 2017.
8. Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2005).
9. a Nahuatl term referencing the space of in-betweeness
10. Gloria Anzaldúa. "(Un)natural Bridges, (Un)safe Spaces"

in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. AnaLouise Keating and Gloria Anzaldua, (New York: Routledge, 2002),1.

11. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 194.
12. Janet Moore, "Cellphone Video Prompts Metro Transit Investigation of Officer's Immigration Query," *Star Tribune*, May 20, 2017.

8.

Remembering Nelson Mandela

Published on *Mujeres Talk* on February 18, 2004

Inés Hernández-Ávila

Photo credit: Free Nelson Mandela poster by Helen STB. November 28, 2013. CC BY 2.0

I wrote this poem for Nelson Mandela in 1988 because he truly moved me, all along the path of his life as I began to know about him, and his spirit will continue to move me, always. The poem speaks for me of what I think of him. He was a great Spirit who came to this earth to be Nelson Mandela, and he kept the radiance he brought with him from the spirit lands of the ancestors. With the example of his life, he "lifted us up," as my own Nez Perce elder, Albert Andrews would say. I have read the poem at literary events, but it has never been published. On the occasion of Mandela's death, my dear colleague, Jualynne Dodson asked, on the Ford Foundation Fellows listserv,

what the impact of Mandela had been on the Chicana/o community. I sent her my poem, from my own Native (Nez Perce) and Tejana perspective. As I re-read what I had written in 1988, I saw that everything that I wrote for him all these years ago, still holds true. And I did write the poem while listening to Abdullah Ibrahim's piano composition, "Mandela." Ibrahim, moved by Mandela, composed his piece, and I was moved by the beautiful music for this great human being, this Maestro, who brought his light to the world. It is a poem from my heart.

For Nelson–Leader, Tribal Person, Elder*

Summer 1988, on the occasion of Mandela's 70th birthday, when the South African government offered him a six hour visit with his family

Oh Mandela, Mandela

I sing your name

in the name of all peoples locked in and up

in their very cells

weighed down by all the forces

that do not want their hearts light

and spirits lifted

Nelson, Nelson

Triumph is a sweet song

the one you know

saxaphones jubilant for your spirit

concentrating

in your space

to will your conscious waking

sleeping dreams

for all of us to see

And it is hard, Mandela, Mandela

Six hours offered you with family

with Winnie and your daughters

six hours to hold each other

gulp in every detailed facet

talk with hands eyes ears mouth

nose smiles tears

as if the heart of the very mother earth

would burst with joy at such a moment

but this joy cannot be

it is, as you say, not possible

for you are not alone

but one of oh so many whose pain like yours

meted out minutely daily

seeks to engulf you in despair

This visit offered is not to them

but to you

And what is six hours in the face of terror centuries old

horror with the face of most intentional genocide?

Six hours more or less of time

when in those same six hours

Children, little children

sit, like you, in other prison cells for their “subversion”

When heads are cracked and bodies wracked

across the landscape of a continent that is yours theirs

A motherland keeps count of each heart battered to a bloody pulp

to stop its count of life

And you know, too, that count

So you stop the maddened offer of a visit

What would you have said, Mandela, Mandela?

“Shall we have tea, Winnie?

Daughters, rub my back, I am so sore.

What shall we talk about?”

And in the next cells casually inflicting itself

in studied vehemence on seemingly countless others

the obscenity of racial/cultural boundless hatred

Nelson, Nelson

A visit?

We are visiting for you all over the world

for you and with you in our homes your face shines

from the walls of our hearts

Poets gather to sing for you

Peoples gather to struggle with you

Workers pass the light of your name from mouth to mouth

Races, classes and sexes unite for you and for the people

Children learn of you and of the brave children

through whose eyes and spirits we find courage

Agelessness is where principled commitment is born and lives

Even in the splattered, broken bones of death

that wants so badly to detain the march of liberation

in all its splendor

Mandela, Mandela

you are real

The people you stand firm for are real and true

The visionary will outlast the cynic, the impotent and depraved

It is a matter of time

Only a small matter of time

The freedom spirit is soaring from heart to heart

around the world

To stop for six hours for convenience?

No, Nelson, Nelson

How you knew how time is precious

How you knew to keep on soaring

Oh, Mandela, Mandela

Keep on soaring

**With thanks to Abdullah Ibrahim, because this poem was written to his composition "Mandela."*

published in 1988 in *Callaloo: A Journal of African-American and African Arts and Letters*, 17 (1): 94-96.

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9.

Mexican Panda: My Short Life in Film School

Published on *Mujeres Talk* on April 15, 2014

Linda Garcia Merchant

Photo credit: Keystone 8mm model B8 by B.S. Wise. CC BY 2.0

TITLE: Mexican Panda SCENE 1: EXTERIOR, SAN JUAN TEOTIHAUCÁN, MEXICO, PYRAMID OF THE SUN, POST NUCLEAR SPRING 2450AD, EARLY MORNING As the sun rises on a Post Nuclear Spring in 2450AD we see a wide tracking shot across the horizon of San Juan Teotihuacán Mexico with the Pyramid of the Sun in shadow. As the camera moves in on the dimly lit and foreboding pyramid we see the slight movement of Mexican grizzly bears at play. As the camera moves in we see they are not bears but Pandas. Three black and white Pandas chasing and catching a fourth black and tan Mexican Panda, beating it to death, then throwing the Panda off the Pyramid. The dead Panda lands on the

ground at the feet of another black and tan Mexican Panda who has witnessed the murder. His eyes meet those of the three murdering Pandas now wiping the blood from their paws onto their fur. The three Pandas being to climb down the Pyramid towards Mexican Panda. He turns to run away from the Pyramid and into the forest.

Instructor: You said this is a fantasy? **Me**: Well yes and no. It's an experimental fantasy with a moral lesson. The Pandas are a metaphor, you know symbolic of resistance to difference in the simple purity of their new world. **Instructor**: You should make them elephants. The Pandas. Make them elephants and it will work. **Me**: I can't see elephants being able to climb or chase anything on a pyramid. **Instructor**: You did say it was experimental? You want us to suspend belief for your argument? Make them elephants. **Me**: I don't understand why I need to do that. The Mexican Panda could exist if the post nuclear climate changed enough to create and support vegetation and atmosphere necessary for their survival. It is a hybridized creature born of the combination of Coati and grizzly bear, both existing in Mexico prior to the nuclear holocaust. It is probable even if it is experimental. **Instructor**: You have to consider your audience. I don't understand Pandas with moral arguments. I understand Elephants.

While this conversation never actually happened during my time spent as a first year MFA in Film and Video at Columbia College in Chicago, many variations of it did. It was always the same, defending a script, a character, my choice of language, a setting, or even my moral arguments. I often felt like the fictional Mexican Panda character I've created above, similar to but definitely not the same as

the other film school Pandas. I certainly experienced the same symbolic outcome as that of my Mexican Panda. The opportunity to get a teaching degree has been crushed and I have been hurled from the academic pyramid.

I remember getting the call about being accepted into the program; it came three days after my interview. It was 2008. I was in Austin, at Martha Cotera's office/shrine to Chicana Feminism, scanning photographs for Sylvia Morales' new film. The tone in my voice made Martha turn away from her desk to face me and, with a serious look on her face ask, "Is everything okay?" I told her the news: I had been accepted as a first year film student with a Follett Fellowship, the top prize for first year students which was full tuition for a year. That night we celebrated. When I called my momma in El Paso, she began to cry.

Two years earlier I had created Voces Primeras, a documentary film production company to capture the history of pioneering Latinas. I had made my first film about women I knew who had worked with mom in the movements, *Mujeres de la Caucus Chicana* (2007). I had spoken to everyone my mother knew about what I was doing. They all introduced me to other people from community organizations and universities. I learned about MALCS, NACCS and NWSA. It was at NWSA where I was introduced to the idea of going back to school and getting a terminal degree to be able to teach. It would be a way to engage and encourage other young people to want to do this work as I could not do it alone. I applied to Columbia College in Chicago because I liked the idea that I could bring my stories to a place that could teach me how to tell those stories on film. I wanted to be a great filmmaker and I was beginning to think that was possible.

Becoming a filmmaker is like learning another language. You master a language as you begin to think in that language. As a filmmaker, you learn to react to events and circumstances by assessing the scale of drama or how the dialogue or storyline will play out. Good filmmakers are always thinking about their stories. Great filmmakers live them. I had ideas about films I wanted to do and voiced these throughout my year in film school. I knew my skills in marketing and promotion would make distributing those films possible, but I also knew I needed to learn the language and processes of production. I defended my right to make the films I wanted, challenging every suggested change to my characters and their storylines. I do not recall hearing in any of the of the introductory sessions in graduate film school that defending my art was not allowed.

I lived for the conversations with my classmates, learning so much about the structure of writing scripts and creating shot lists. Teaching them about self promotion, helping them find locations in and around the city. We encouraged each other about character development and emotional arcs. I can remember so many conversations from that year since first walking into the film school's doors at 11th and Wabash. The conversation changed completely at the end of that first year, after my Focus Film review, a requirement to continue in the program that was critical of my independence and that ended with a recommendation that I leave the program.

It has been five years since I was dismissed. My classmates have produced their thesis films and I have gone to their screenings. I frequently walk past the building that marked my period of brief promise within the academy. I do not

often enter and when I do I am always expecting someone to jump out at me and yell "GET OUT." That building continues to be a reminder of my failure to connect to a community and process required for teaching. It is a scar that sometimes opens, sometimes bleeds and never quite heals.

So in February of 2014, when I went to the first screening of *The Black Sheep Roundtable*, the Black Film Society's (BFS) film about their Columbia College experience. I went to support their work. I thought, how brave to break the code of silence and speak to the challenging nature of film school. I was still afraid of that code. For five years I had not spoken publicly about that year. I was frightened, embarrassed, self conscious, self doubting, and thinking that these things had only happened to me.

As I watched these students sharing their pain, frustrations, and rejections I knew that if I would not reveal my own tragic journey, I would at least stand up and say how proud I was of their bravery. I shared enough to prompt the students to ask to hear my story and to include that interview in the final film. I said yes, praying on the train ride home that this was the right thing to do.

I went home and to the basement to open the plastic boxes marked "Columbia: Do Not Touch." At the very top of the neatly packed materials was my dismissal letter. I sat on the floor reading the letter, class notes, and then my final paper on the Virgen de Guadalupe as Oppressor in the film *Maria Candelaria* (Xochimilco) (1944).

I went to the interview with BFS student filmmakers a few days later with my letter and final paper, along with newspaper articles about my work, posters from festivals

and screenings, some awards and a journal article I had written. All the things I had done while in school. The interview went quickly. I got more emotional and personal than I thought I would.

It would be a few weeks before the next screening of the newly edited film that would include my interview. During that time I thought about how completely that short year of school changed my life. A month after I was dismissed, I began working with Maria Cotera on Chicana Por Mi Raza. It would take another two years before I felt confident enough to take on making a narrative short and even then, the validation didn't happen until in a critical scene I knew we had the money shot. I was sure then that one day I would be a great director.

I went to the screening of the final cut alone. My stomach in knots and my heart leaping from my chest, I walked into the packed theater and saw a number of faculty, the president of the college and the chairman of the department. I sat in the very last row, three seats from the exit. I was sitting next to one of the professors from the application interview. I heard nothing and felt even less. When the lights went down and the film began, my mouth began to water and I felt nauseous, but I stayed in that seat and willed myself to watch.

It got easier, each time I came on the screen, what I said was appropriate to the points being made. By the end of the film, all I could think was, what really smart choices the director made about all the contributions.

The lights came up, the students read a statement of suggestions for improvement, thanked everyone for coming and then had a Q&A. There were two screenings

that night and people for the second screening were milling around the back doors waiting for the Q&A to end. The president spoke about diversity and that the bigger systemic issues needed to be addressed. The chairman said nothing. A few of the faculty offered solutions that included courses already being taught and a willingness to work with the students to make changes. I said nothing.

The faculty left, a few more came in, the professor sitting next to me said I had done a good job articulating my pain. I told him that it was hard and it still is. He patted my arm and smiled and said it was good to see me.

The second screening, also packed, included a lot more community members and students, and colleagues I had invited. During the Q&A one of those colleagues asked the BFS students how they knew of my story. Reina, the president of the BFS student group, pointed to me and asked if I would like to share. I said that an understanding about diversity did exist at the school and it came in the face of a black man, a white man and a white woman. I said that I learned how to write scripts and direct films from these three people, who were willing to have the hard conversations about process with me. I said what I've learned is still gospel and is what has enabled me to make at least one award winning narrative short.

Lots of friends and family and colleagues that have seen the film online have said how proud they are of me for finally speaking up about this. I have also learned that the embarrassment, failure and self doubt I felt were wasted emotions, as I did nothing wrong. I was vocal about defending my stories and art to a world that insisted I make films that only spoke to a broader, mainstream audience.

I really want to believe that Columbia College will listen to the voices of its black film students. I hope the lesson learned is that all art has equal value. I hope that the stories of film students of color and the body of work produced by filmmakers of color, is given the importance and attention that other filmmakers receive. The students of color pay no less tuition to attend these schools. Based on this fact alone their demands for equal resources has merit.

In a fair and level world the academic pyramid would see the tremendous potential of every filmmaker walking though those doors. Students, eager to learn about technique and craft to then apply that foundation to their stories. Stories cultivated from history and imagination and manner just waiting for a space to become real. Even if the world is not fair and level, the administration could create a space within the college that supports the talents of all of its students. How many truly great films and performances could come from a space where we are all equal, have value and can learn from each other?

Ultimately the academic pyramid can and will have to accommodate both this Mexican and the non-Mexican Panda. We can't all be killed off or made in to elephants.

SCENE 2: EXTERIOR JUNGLE THREE DAYS LATER MID AFTERNOON

Mexican Panda, running and hiding for three days through the wilderness, comes upon a small break in the jungle, that ends by a small pool. He sees other black and white Pandas with cubs, some of which are black and tan like him. He watches for a very long time before coming closer to the small but happy group, some swimming in the pool, others cleaning fruit. A girl Panda sees him watching from a distance and motions him to come closer. She is smiling.

Linda Garcia Merchant has worked as independent filmmaker and digital media producer. She was a 2014 Contributing Blogger on *Mujeres Talk*. She is an Assistant Professor at the University of Houston.

10.

On the Colonial Legacy of U.S. Universities and the Transcendence of Your Resistance

Published on *Mujeres Talk* on October 13, 2015

Oriel María Siu

Oriel María Siu is Assistant Professor and the founding Director of Latino Studies at the University of Puget Sound.

(This is a copy of the Keynote speech I gave at the University of Puget Sound's Graduates of Color Ceremony in May 2015. I dedicate it to all students of color at this and any other institution of higher learning in the U.S.)

As people of color, you were never meant to be at a university. I was never meant to teach at one. And your family and I were never meant to be here celebrating your graduation today.

The establishment of universities you see, were a direct result of the European colonization of the Americas and

later white settler expansion all over the globe, a process begun in 1492. From the beginning, universities served as a crucial tool for the introduction and retention of a white Eurocentered power structure in these occupied territories. In the Americas, universities were created and run by British and Spanish settlers and later by their descendants for the purpose of founding and retaining the colonial order of things. The founding years of the first universities in this continent should therefore be no surprise; they directly paralleled the English and Spanish processes of colonization north, center, and south: the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo (1538), Universidad de San Marcos of Perú (1551), Real y Pontificia Universidad de México, today the UNAM (1551), and Harvard University (1636), to name but a few.

Through savage processes of forced displacement, genocide, racialization, and the enslavement of Natives and Africans, whites self-proclaimed themselves superior to other people upon entering the Americas. From 1492 to 1592 – or the first 100 years of the occupation alone – it has been estimated that Europeans decimated more than 90 million indigenous people in the Americas, making it the bloodiest holocaust in the history of human kind (other estimates place this number above the 100 million people mark). Aside from this genocide, more than 11 million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic, with death rates so high during that atrocious Middle Passage that many lives were lost at sea. Engendered by a system of slavery and the decimation and removal of Native life, the colonial order of things in the Americas consisted of the formation of a particular economic system; one which controlled, confiscated and reserved productive Native lands for the use of the white settler; one which ensured

the flow of exploitable, cheap and free labor for the occupiers' benefit; and one which ensured little to no upward mobility for the colonized. Universities, as I was saying, were crucial to the retention and functioning of this colonial order.

As spaces for the creation and retention of systems of thought, universities contributed to the eradication of indigenous educational institutions and to the displacement, invalidation, destruction, and subalternization of indigenous and African ways of knowing. In the minds of missionaries and "men of letters" – as scholars were called back then– indigenous knowledges were dictates of the devil and thus had to be disciplined, punished and eliminated. These knowledges and epistemologies neither corresponded to the history of the so-called West the colonizers imposed here in the Americas nor were they recognized as valid or beneficial to the colonial system. Native knowledges did not support racial, class nor gender hierarchies – all organizing principles of colonial America. As Duwamish Chief Seattle said to the settlers that later appropriated his name and this land in the Northwest, Native ways did not see land as belonging to people as the white man understood it, but rather that people belonged to the land. As sites for the development and preservation of ideology, universities thus became the mechanism through which these indigenous knowledges were made inferior and obsolete by the white colonial settlers, replaced instead with Eurocentric lenses of the world. These new lenses were channeled through the academic disciplines that universities engendered – Math, Sciences, Humanities and Philosophy – disciplines all designed to rationalize the Eurocentric white power structure in place still to this day.

Photo credit: From Types of Mankind (1854) by J.C. Nott, and Geo. R. Gliddon. In arguing for the superiority of whites, scientists claimed that the world's "races" had different "origins" and were therefore different "species." Photo by APS Museum. CC BY-NC 2.0

Universities were essential to the development of scientific racism. For more than two centuries, from the 1500s to the 1800s, colleges and universities throughout the United States and the Americas supported research and implemented curricula that argued for the enslavement of black people, the superiority of the white man, and the inferiority of Natives and their ways of knowing. Scholars such as Josiah Clark Nott, Robert Knox, George Robins Gliddon, and Samuel George Morton among many others lived to prove that the racial inferiority of people of African, Pacific Islander, Asian, Caribbean, and Indigenous descent, justified conquering them, enslaving them, exterminating them, exploiting them, segregating them, and/or occupying their land. Be this within the newly created U.S. borders, or south of the U.S. borders, or in Africa, or in Asia, or the Pacific Islands, all regions colonized by Europe and/or the U.S. during the 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. In arguing white superiority, these scholars measured the skulls of diverse populations, put forth theories of polygenism supporting the classification of human populations as distinct races stemming from different origins, and spoke of the "primitive psychological organization" of slaves. Their research and the value given to it by way of the university

institution made it possible to create the logic for the colonization and occupation of vast territories and peoples during the forming years of European and US imperialism world-wide.

Universities both in the North and South of the United States participated in the economy of slavery. As scholar Craig Steven Wilder's work most recently demonstrates (*Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, 2013), in the South many colleges owned and used enslaved blacks to build and maintain university campuses. Fully at the disposal of the universities that owned them, campus slaves were forced to commit their labor to the campus which held them. They served the students, the faculty, and the administrators. Slaves took care of administrators' and faculties' children, rang campus bells, prepared meals, cleaned students' shoes, made beds, obtained the wood for fires, and tended farmland owned by administrators and universities. In some instances, students, administrators and faculty even paid special fees to their respective university to be able to bring their personal slaves to campus. Yale, Columbia, Harvard, Brown, and Princeton among many other prestigious universities of the North, were no. These institutions suitably accepted into their student body the sons of wealthy slave-owners, including sons of wealthy slave-holder elites from the Caribbean (Wilder).[1] Both directly and indirectly, universities all throughout the nation supported the economy of slavery, benefited from it, and played a crucial role in retaining the racist and racial order of things in the newly created white settler nation.

Photo credit: Engraving from 1827, University of Virginia. Enslaved female carrying baby. Zoomed in image of Rotunda and Lawn, B. Tanner engraving from Boye's Map of Virginia from the University of Virginia Library Materials.

The sons of plantation owners who studied in Europe were seen as experts on Natives and enslaved Blacks because of their close contact with them (Wilder). Insisting on the economic benefits of slavery while also furthering the case for U.S. genocidal politics at home, these slave-owners' sons wrote entire dissertations and gave lectures on the physical and intellectual inferiority of these groups (Wilder). Their work's objective was to dehumanize their subjects or rather objects of study. Their lectures not only helped validate and explain the system of racist economic, social, and political rule in place in the U.S., it also argued for its perpetuation.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Blacks and other people of color in the U.S. as well as Jews and non-Protestant Christians were still not admitted into universities. Black colleges and universities were created for this very particular reason in the 1800s. Throughout the U.S. students of color were not legally allowed into higher education until the second half of the 20th century. That is approximately 50 years ago.

The very university from which you graduate today was founded in 1888, just a few years into the occupation of

the Puget Sound area by its white settlers. Even though the area began to be "visited" by English "explorers" in the late 1700s, permanent European settlement was achieved in this region in 1852 when a Swedish man by the name of Nicholas De Lin discovered there was lots of money to be made by exploiting the area's lumber. The Nisqually and Puyallup regional tribes fought back and in 1855 the settlers were forced to flee, being able to return only after Native populations of the area were put in a nearby reservation by the U.S. government, leaving the Puget Sound area free for its exploitation by the returning settlers. Founded in 1888, our university is directly and indirectly a product of this occupation.

But just as these academic institutions have historically wanted to make you and your bodies of color invisible, there is also a long history of struggle for visibility, inclusion and the right to existence that precedes you; one that also dates back to more than 500 years ago; from Native and slave rebellions, to organized walk-outs, hunger strikes, sit-ins, street protests, to people writing our own excluded histories and creating spaces within academia so that you and I could learn about our own histories and struggles as well as recuperate lost ancestral knowledges. Many students and educators before you even paid with their lives for you to be able to be here today; for you and I to be here today and to celebrate you. During the 1960s young women and men fought the police, racist administrations, went to jail and sacrificed spending time with their own families to create the possibility for you to be able to get the very degree that will soon be in your hands. Your immediate communities and families have also sacrificed a great deal and gone through many difficult moments in life in order to make

this day a reality for you. I sincerely congratulate them on this day, only your parents know all the struggles they have endured to make this day possible for you.

During your time at the University of Puget Sound all of you graduates have pushed and struggled and studied late nights and long days to arrive here and you made it to graduation. But always remember that you are exceptions. Despite us now having an educational system that is color-blind in theory, Blacks, Latinos, and Natives specifically, continue to be under-represented among those making it to college and graduating with bachelor degrees. In high schools, Latino and African American students nationally are disproportionately represented at every stage of the school-to-prison pipeline and only 53% of Native students graduate from high school.[2] In today's corporatized university system moreover, students of color are shouldering the most student debt, disproportionately higher numbers having to drop out of college because of the economic burden that academia now represents. You graduating from here today is that much more symbolic because of all of this.

But I want you to know you have a long road ahead of you. Twenty years ago a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science degree held a lot of weight; it was an accomplishment. Today it is still an accomplishment but it does not carry the weight that it once did. So therefore I urge you to go further; I urge you to go get your Masters and your Ph.D.s, to continue your education in one form or another. And I challenge you once you're out of these spaces to create opportunities for those in your communities of origin. Too many in our communities who make it to far places too easily forget their origins;

choosing to distance themselves from their communities and their own community's history of struggle and survival. I urge you to not be one of them.

I wanted also to tell you you're definitely not graduating from this institution with just a Bachelor's degree. By now you all have a Ph.D. in surviving and knowing these dominant white spaces of power that you will continue to navigate after graduation; these are places that will continuously try to shape and mold you and your spirit; dictate who you should be; what you should think; where you should go in life. The University of Puget Sound, while not always the most welcoming space for students and people of color, does in my mind do something beautiful. It challenges you and in doing so prepares you for what is to come ahead. Consciously or unconsciously you've met this challenge. While here, the dissident, non-conformist, rebel in you learned how to create what bell hooks would call our own communities of resistance to spaces that in subtle and not so subtle ways too often told you: "you don't belong here". That resistance may have looked different for every one of you. For some of you it looked like student activism on social justice related issues, building solidarities between students of color, while for others it may have been selecting particular friendships; or choosing your mentors or simply knowing when to seek spaces away from whiteness. While here, consciously or unconsciously you managed to create for yourself communities that helped you find your way through the daily micro and macro aggressions, the assumptions, the presumptions, the comments inside and outside the classroom, the burden of having to explain yourselves and your experiences –all the time–, the loneliness, the alienation, and yes, the depression. While

here, the dissident, non-conformist, rebel in you pushed you to create communities that allowed you your voice whenever you needed to speak, yell and cry; to create communities that also allowed for your silence whenever you didn't feel like speaking, yelling or crying. While at Puget Sound, the dissident, non-conformist survivor of 500 years of colonization in you also learned to question that which you have been taught in the classroom; that which you read in color-blind texts presenting themselves as universal knowledge.

So you leave here knowing when to separate useful knowledge from that which will not serve you, but further estrange you and worse, assimilate you into what the dominant culture wants of you, thinks of you, and desires of you. There is therefore very little I could advise you today in this art of survival you all know very well and have Ph.D.s in by now. The art is actually now more than 500 years old, passed on to us by our ancestors, our parents, and the collectivity of our resisting spirits.

What advice I can offer however is to not ever let the resister and creator in you be silenced; if you spoke too soft here, amplify that voice; if you found your voice here, solidify and strengthen it. If you feel you are still in the search of your voice, be compassionate and honest with yourself, your interests, and your passions. Dream big and in following those dreams be as persistent as you can be and do not give up or let others take you in different directions.

Be creative. The world that awaits you out there is at times too ugly, too vicious; too inhuman. It is a world replete with racism, fear of your bodies, a world continuously in crisis and at war; a world submerged in a neoliberal

economy that thrives on the imprisonment of bodies of color, war, forced migrations, the continued destruction of our mother earth, and the commodification of absolutely everything including love. This is a world that too often will seem to leave little to no air to breathe. So please go out and create your own breathing spaces. Continue in the creation of resisting, loving communities because you didn't and don't ever get anywhere on your own. As our Native sisters and brothers will always remind us, we are all connected to communities that transcend time. We're connected to the first ancestors who walked the earth; to their struggles and their deeds. But we're also connected to those who are not yet here, those generations who will be born tomorrow and thereafter; those who will walk this earth in the future long after we're gone. Our job in the middle is to bridge the gap, take on the inheritance from our ancestors and our past, add our own deeds, our struggles, and leave this a better place for those that will follow. The responsibility, to say the least, is tremendous.

So make yourself and your communities visible. Resist becoming invisible; and resist becoming that which others and dominant spaces want you to become; resist it with all of your passion, your love and your humanity. Stay connected and grateful to those who've helped you and loved you along the way and those who will continue to be there for you. And give back.

Above all, don't ever forget we were never meant to be here celebrating you today. Love you all.

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of Puget Sound. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles; her Masters from the University of California, Berkeley; and her B.A. degrees in Chicana/o Studies and Latin American Literatures from California State University, Northridge.

Notes

1. Information based on Craig Steven Wilder's excellent book on the subject of universities and slavery, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (2013). I highly recommend this read.
2. "Tolerance in Schools for Latino Students: Dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline," *The Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy*, May 1 2015.

11.

Organizing on the Ground for BLM: A Gay Mixed Black and Mexican Perspective

Published on *Latinx Talk* on November 18, 2020

Jesus G. Smith

Photo credit: Courtesy of JB. Used with permission. CC BY 2.0

Growing up in El Paso, TX (EPT) and embodying three marginalized identities—gay, Black and Mexican—made me acutely aware of the sinister ways that structures of inequality impact the lives of vulnerable populations. I am the son of a

Black U.S. Army Veteran and a Mexican immigrant from the town bordering EPT, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. It was in my hometown, that Patrick Crusius, the deranged 21-year-old White man drove all the way from a Dallas suburb, to shoot and kill 22 Mexican people and injured 26 others at a local Walmart (Romo, 2019). It is also the location where parts of Donald Trump's border wall are being built, as he desires to keep out Mexicans whom he has constructed as "murderers" and "rapists" (Lambie, 2018). Most importantly, EPT is also the place where I first began organizing against inequality. Back in 2009 when I was 22, two gay men were harassed by security at the popular restaurant Chico's Tacos for kissing, causing me and several LGBT activists to stand outside of the popular restaurant protesting the homophobia and demanding justice (Jones, 2019). This experience would continue to influence me several years later.

In El Paso, I was a young kid in a far west Texas border town, barely coming to terms with my sexuality. Being in a majority minority town meant that culturally I was offered some relief in that I could focus on my sexuality more so than my race since both Black and Mexican people were socially constructed as racially undesirable to Whites. Now, I am a 34-year-old adult living in Appleton, Wisconsin, a majority White town in middle America. Focusing on my sexuality at the expense of my race is a luxury I can no longer afford. The police killings of cis and trans Black men such as George Floyd and Tony McDade, as well as the murder of Latina US soldier Vanessa Guillen and Black woman Breonna Taylor, have weighed heavily on my mind. When Jacob Blake, an unarmed Black man, was shot several times in the back by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin (two hours south of where I live), the racism directed towards Black and Latinx people was inching

closer and closer to my doorstep. I knew the time was now that I needed to fight for change, but how would my identities and experiences as a gay, mixed Black and Mexican man from El Paso, TX impact my organizing on the ground in Appleton, Wisconsin? My experiences in EPT shaped me into becoming the man that I am today, they gave me the compassion and understanding as well as the knowledge necessary to collaborate on a Pride Black Lives Matter protest in a way that was inclusive to all of us being harmed by systems of oppression while still focusing on the plight of Black lives in the U.S.

Growing up in the Sun City, I had the honor of being raised by two incredible parents. My mother, a Mexican immigrant from the town bordering El Paso, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, knew more than many about what it meant to cross borders. She crossed borders literally, as she traveled back and forth to El Paso from her hometown, and metaphorically, crossing the racial border barley three years after it became legal in the U.S. There, in the sun city of EPT, she married my father who was stationed at Fort Bliss in EPT, presenting their marriage as an example of love and solidarity between communities. My mother taught me that compassion and understanding for others could help bring about positive change. My father, born in 1943, lived through legal segregation, racist violence and oppression as a Black man in the U.S. This is knowledge he imparted on me as I grew into a man. Together, they demonstrated for me how knowledge, compassion and understanding can unite across differences, lessons I always held onto.

In college I worked as the Rainbow Miner Initiative (RMI) Intern at the Women's Resource Center at the University of

Texas in El Paso (UTEP). There, I recruited for and trained speakers for SpeakOUT UTEP, an LGBTQIA Speaker's Bureau. The opportunity to do so allowed me to work with a variety of different queer folks, helping empower them (and myself) to embrace our authentic selves while attempting to educate straight people on campus about queer issues. This meant I had to learn to lead difficult discussions with people who didn't always agree with me or share in my beliefs, making myself vulnerable to others by sharing personal details about my life in hopes that people's hearts would be changed, and they would be more accepting. This also meant I had to reach out to different departments, from Mathematics to Women's Studies, to convince them that they should request our speaker's panel for their classes because everyone would benefit from this knowledge about LGBT folks. I even added straight people to our panels sometimes to drive home the idea that many heterosexual people feel like they didn't choose their sexuality or gender identities any more than queer folks and to create solidarity between gender identities. After collecting data on our panels, I discovered that many people's lives and opinions were in fact changing for the better as a result of exposure to SpeakOUT. Through SpeakOUT UTEP, I was able to use compassion and understanding, values I gained from my mother, to make connections with people who might not have otherwise agreed or believed in me. This skill would become important in Appleton, WI.

As a graduate student in the sociology program at UTEP, I began to develop the critical knowledge regarding systemic racism that assisted in my organizing on the ground in Wisconsin. Though I previously mentioned how culturally I was able to focus on my sexual identity more so than

racism because of the racial and ethnic breakdown of the town, the reality is that racism was and continues to be a structural impediment in EPT. For instance, while poverty has lessened in Texas as a whole, in heavily Latinx locations such as El Paso, poverty remains higher when compared with Whites. El Paso for instance, is one of the poorest cities in the state (Williams, 2018). Aside from the income inequality, El Paso has a long history of racism such as the murder of Mexican women in the who worked in Maquiladoras in the 80s and 90s, whose murders, dubbed femicides, international corporations were indifferent too (Kladzyk, 2017). EPT also has a long history of protesting White supremacy, such as the bath riots of 1917 when Mexicans crossing the border rose up against border patrol who were forcibly stripping them naked and bathing them in kerosene and Zyklon B (a practice that would later inspire Nazi Germany).

My graduate studies program taught me about the similar forms of racism employed against Black and Latinx bodies, such as lynching's (Mosley, 2019) and school segregation (Roos, 2019). For my master's thesis, I explored sexual racism in the gay community on the border, where I was able to interview Black gay men about their experiences with racism which included being called the n-word, rejection, and increased exposure to HIV risk (Smith, 2014). This knowledge regarding the way racism repeats itself through time, impacts different communities in similar fashions and pits communities against each other would end up being vital information to my organizing in Appleton.

Once I was moved to Appleton, Wisconsin, I was invited by a colleague to help organize a protest for Black Lives,

an event that allowed me to put into practice all the things I had learned growing up in El Paso, TX as a gay mixed race man. By July of 2020, I had been living in Appleton for three years after obtaining my Ph.D. in sociology at Texas A&M University and beginning a job in the Ethnic Studies program at Lawrence University. I was invited to help plan, promote, and lead the march by my colleague, a mixed race, non-binary Black person alongside two queer Black womyn and my partner, a queer mixed race Black man. As Black queer folks, mixed race folks, and non-binary folks, we were used to being marginalized in both our racial and sexual communities (Han et al., 2019). Yet, as a result of this marginalization, we understood that in order to pass meaningful policy that protects vulnerable communities, we must work in solidarity with others. Tapping into my values imparted to me by my parents, training in SpeakOUT UTEP and my knowledge from my graduate program, we were able to work towards solidarity with others.

Understanding how White supremacy and systemic racism impacts minorities helped us magnify the connection between Black, Latinx, and queer communities. As Black Lives Matter (BLM) uprisings took place across the nation, it was only a matter of time before Pride marches during the summer would be transformed into BLM marches. Also, because of the racism that was rampant in mainstream gay communities, we knew we needed to change what got attention during Pride. As such, we made the focus of our Pride march about the lives of Black trans and non-binary folks lost to police violence, as well as the systemic racism impacting Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities in order to develop compassion and understanding across our communities. We developed a

theme for our protest, making it "Pride was a Riot" in homage to Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, the Black and Latinx trans women who protested police brutality during Stonewall (Jacobs, 2019). The theme was a reminder that Latinx and Queer communities, alongside Black communities, have experienced police brutality and state sanctioned violence, and that many of the privileges we enjoy today have been earned through hard won fights from poor and marginalized people in our past. It was also a reminder that my fight today for Black and Latinx people comes as an homage to my past in El Paso, TX.

Together the five of us split up the duties of organizing the march. One person dealt with the logistics of when and where we would protest, arranging the route and making sure we had street medics, water, and masks available. Another person researched extensively on the victims of police violence and worked with the local newspaper and news stations on promotion of the protest. Much like SpeakOUT which demanded reaching out to different departments and groups on campus, we reached out to other organizations in Appleton to collaborate with such as African Heritage Inc. the predominate African American organization in town, The Wisconsin Bail Out The People Movement, a national network founded to oppose the 2008 trillion dollar bank bailout, and Diverse and Resilient, the local LGBT of color organization. Recalling my time protesting Chico's Tacos, I knew protests needed to be followed up with demands and plans for action. As a result, my partner and I crafted eight posters with eight research backed solutions for police accountability, including a call for redirecting funds towards better paying jobs and access to health care, issues pertinent to Black, Latinx, and

Indigenous people as well as queer people of color (Woodward & Mark, 2020).

I also worked with organizers from Whitewater, Wisconsin, another rural town south of Appleton, in order to draft a letter for city council leaders that laid out the researched backed solutions to police brutality. Borrowing from the posters my partner and I created, the letter cited the research backed solutions on the posters and added the original studies as footnotes for council members to examine. Additionally, we created and distributed a survey for local Appleton residents in both English and Spanish, asking them about their feelings towards the local police and their support of specific police reform proposals. Currently, we are still collecting signatures for the letter and data from the survey to present to City Council as we advocate for change in our community. Using the knowledge I gained from my education at UTEP that illuminated the way racism impacted both Black Latinx communities, I crafted a speech for the protest that not only honored Black Lives but called for solidarity between groups.

After much work organizing the protest, we gathered in downtown Appleton on July 11th and marched down to the police station to demand justice. We then took over the streets and marched through the downtown area, proclaiming that Black Queer Lives Matter alongside Black Lives Matter. Once we reached downtown, I delivered my speech, opening myself up and becoming vulnerable, similar to my times in SpeakOUT. I called for different groups to join us, reminded people of the Latinx children locked up in cages on the US border, and I honored the murders of both Breonna Taylor and Vanessa

Guillen. Part of the goal for my speech and our protest was not only to bring visibility to queer and trans people of color murdered by police, but to also bring awareness to the abuses of immigrants on the border, to highlight the missing Indigenous women, and to honor the death of Vanessa Guillen and Breonna Taylor. Recalling my SpeakOUT days where I added straight folks to panels as a way to show straight people that they can relate to us too, I even drew attention to the deaths of Whites in Middle America to the opioid crisis and the loss of jobs for poor Whites, so that they could see how wealthy White elites oppressed them as well and used racism as a weapon to keep them from marching in solidarity with us.

For us organizers more generally, and me specifically, our protest was against the way systemic racism is produced in our many and varied institutions such as police departments, border patrol agencies and the military. As the son of a mother who was a Mexican immigrant, I am sensitive to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) abuses on the border that have harmed immigrants of all colors (Warikoo, 2020). I am also aware, as a son of a Black man in the U.S. military, that the military does both: exploits the lack of employment for poor Black and Brown folks in order to increase their numbers while simultaneously providing a middle-class lifestyle for them (Cooper, 2020). I know how many men in the military and police institutions can engage in violent behavior (Friedersdorf, 2014), especially towards people of color. All of this was clear to me in EPT in the past and continued to be clear to me in the present. As such, we understood that when Black lives matter, including Black Latinx, Black immigrants, and Black queers, all lives will matter. For us as a group, joining in our Pride Black Lives Matter

march was about building solidarity with others against this system of oppression that is harming us all. Clearly, the knowledge I gained studying systems of oppression at UTEP was vital to my organizing on the ground in Appleton.

After the protest, the five of us organizers got together as a group to reflect on what we learned, what we gained, and how to turn the energy from the protest into action. Results so far from our survey suggest huge support from the community towards policies that hold police accountable and our letter to city council has gotten several hundred signatures. Yet, some of the most powerful results of the protest for me was the fact that our march had people of all backgrounds in attendance including people of different races, sexualities and nationalities. The compassion and understanding I was taught in the Sun City were in clear display in Appleton, Wisconsin as we united as a group in solidarity. The knowledge I gained, first from my father who taught me about racism, and then from my alma mater that taught me about Black and Latinx solidarity, helped me create a speech and letter based on tangible solutions to complex problems. See, the Pride march for Black Lives for me, a gay Black and Mexican man, was about representing EPT, the town where my parents showed what love across racial borders looked like, the town that showed what a queer protest against discrimination looked like, and a town that showed what racial intellect regarding Black and Latinx communities could accomplish. Together, our organizing on the ground in Appleton along with my compassion, understanding and knowledge, skills and values I learned growing up in El Paso, TX as a person with three marginalized identities, helped make our protest a success.

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Discussion Questions

Rosa Amador and Theresa Delgadillo

1. How do these essays define Latinx or Latinidad? Is this strictly an ethnic or racial identity? How important is a critical consciousness to Latinx and Latinidad?

2. Do these essays aim to change conceptions of Latinx or Latinidad? How? In what ways? What do they ask us to see, do, or know?

3. What solutions or ideas do these essays advance to overcome anti-Black racism among Latinx?

4. What do these essays reveal about the similarities between Latinx and African American struggles as well as the differences?

5. How does racism affect Latinxs? How does racism affect Black Latinx in particular?

6. What do these essays tell us about how racism and sexism combine in the experience of women and Latinas?

7. What views emerge in these essays about the relationship among gender, sexuality, and anti-racism?

8. Several of the essays in this reader discuss the Black struggle in the U.S., while others consider

the Black struggle in the Caribbean or South Africa or other parts of the globe. Why might it be important to consider the global context of Black struggle?

9. Diaspora is a term that describes the common situation of African peoples displaced from their homelands and dispersed throughout the globe through enslavement and exploitation. How does this diaspora matter in Latin America and in U.S. Latinx populations?

10. Feminism is a term that describes the belief in and advocacy for the equality of women. How do these essays link feminist and anti-racist concerns?

11. In small groups, work to generate some additional research on the historical and contemporary Black Latinx figures discussed in these essays or others you may have heard about. Compare your findings. How do these figures compare to more well-known figures of Black and Latinx history?

12. What do these essays tell us about racism in educational systems and academia? How might African Americans and Latinxs work together to end racism in these systems?

13. What would a non-racist school or university look like?

14. What do these essays propose in order to raise awareness of the overlapping issues of racism

and colorism among Latinx and between African American and Latinxs.

15. These essays often show that Black Latinx are more than their race and ethnicity combined. What can we learn from the intersections of sexuality, gender, race, and ethnicity discussed in these essays?

16. How do you think the different ways that these writers name themselves or others matters to them and to others? Why is naming or self-naming important? For example, consider "Latinx," "Latine," "Latina," "Afro-Latinx," "AfroLatinx," "Black Latinx," "Indigenous."

Appendix

Embedded Sources

Several essays in this collection included embedded hyperlinks. For readers using a hardcopy of this reader, we provide a list below of each chapter's embedded sources and the URL where you can find it.

Chapter 2: "Mujeres Talk about Ferguson, and Beyond"

1. African American Policy Forum: bit.ly/intaapf
2. Blanca E. Vega's recent blog on the *Latino Rebels* site: http://bit.ly/lrsfpblc
3. #blacklivesmatter: http://bit.ly/tfwhsblm
4. "vivos se los llevaron…": bit.ly/vsllyvlc
5. "fue el estado": bit.ly/zapwpfee
6. #not1more deportation: bit.ly/notomdep
7. Critical Resistance: bit.ly/crclrsc
8. report: bit.ly/nomrdth
9. Samir Chopra: bit.ly/tdspotp

Chapter 6: "Dear Latines: Your Antiblackness Will Not Save You"

1. Whiteness: bit.ly/tccogzr
2. Trayvon Martin: bit.ly/nbcgzng

3. Philando Castile: bit.ly/voxpspc
4. Andres Guardado: bit.ly/latcsag
5. Godreau 2002: bit.ly/reaschgcsm
6. Dinzey Flores 2013: bit.ly/dinflolilo
7. Telles 2014: bit.ly/reaschgperc
8. Reid Andrews 2016: bit.ly/utexdisra
9. Rodríguez-Silva 2012: bit.ly/palgrrs
10. Wade 2010: bit.ly/entutex
11. Dzidzienyo et al 2005: bit.ly/palgrnenf
12. Hernandez 2012: bit.ly/cambrrsla
13. Mintz 1989: bit.ly/cartransf
14. Wade 1997: bit.ly/raeila
15. Torres and Whitten 1998: bit.ly/bilaatc
16. Duany 1998: bit.ly/jstord1998
17. Rivero 2002: bit.ly/sagerivero
18. Bonilla Silva 2004: bit.ly/rwrcbrebo
19. Too Black to be Latino/a: bit.ly/tbtblbab

Chapter 9: “Mexican Panda: My Short Life in Film School”

1. Voces Primeras: bit.ly/vcsprs
2. Mujeres de la Caucus Chicana: bit.ly/lmdlcc
3. The Black Sheep Roundtable: bit.ly/yttbsr
4. Chicana Por Mi Raza: bit.ly/cpmruthsocf

Chapter 10: “On the Colonial Legacy of U.S. Universities”

1. University of Virginia Library Materials: bit.ly/uovedusi